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LITERATURE

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No. 9, Vol. XI

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Address: "International Literature", P. O. Box 527, Moscow
Cable address: Interlit, Moscow

INTERNATIONAL LITERATURE

9

1944

THE STATE LITERARY PUBLISHING HOUSE
PRINTED IN THE SOVIET UNION

44537

Date 11. 11. 68

THE SLAVS' STRUGGLE AGAINST THE GERMANS

From time immemorial, as again today, the Slav peoples have had to maintain a stubborn struggle against the German invaders, a struggle for their very existence. Millions of Russians, Poles and Czechs have perished in this struggle; streams of innocent Slav blood have been made to flow; cultural treasures have been ruthlessly destroyed and hundreds of prosperous Slav cities have been ruined.

Since the VII century the Slav peoples have formed an impregnable barrier hindering the predatory expansion of the German invaders to the East from the Elbe, Oder and Vistula.

According to his own frequent statements, Hitler's treacherous attacks on Czechoslovakia, Poland, Yugoslavia and the U.S.S.R. constituted an effort to carry out the savage and insane "age-long campaign of the Germans in the East" (notorious as the "Drang nach Osten"), and to establish, firstly over the Slav peoples and then over the whole world, the supremacy of the "Germanic race", the only race—according to the teachings of the German fascists—"having the right to existence". It will be remembered that the Führer made a statement unexampled in its cynical frankness, to the effect that "if we want to establish our great German Empire we must first of all *drive out and destroy* the Slav peoples—Russians, Poles, Czechs, Slovaks, Bulgars, Ukrainians and Byelorussians".

This animal hatred which the fascists display towards the freedom-loving Slavs has its roots deep down in the grim history of the Germans.

The first victims of the German invasion of the Slavonic East were the Western Slavs who in the VII century occupied extensive territories between the River Labe (German Elbe) and Zala in the West, the River Vistula in the East, the Baltic Sea in the North and the Adriatic in the South; that is, the whole of the present Prussia, Czechoslovakia, Austria and Hungary. The German hordes massacred the entire male population and carried off

the women and the children into slavery. Districts that were densely populated by the Slav tribes were turned into deserts. In their robber raids to the East the Germans burnt down all the Slav settlements, many of which were famous throughout the Europe of that day for their riches and splendid buildings. If, through the industry of their inhabitants, these settlements succeeded in arising out of the heaps of ashes and ruins they again met the same fate.

For four hundred years the Polabian Slavs defended their freedom and it was only in the second half of the XII century, by means of greatly superior forces, that the Germans were able to establish themselves on Slav territories. Life under the German yoke meant that the Slavs of Polabia lost their freedom and all possibility of any form of national life. The German policy of massacring some and subjecting others to centuries of denationalization resulted in the once dense population living between the Elbe and the Vistula being reduced to a small handful of Lužic Serbs, totaling about 150,000, settling in the basin of the Spreva (German Spree), a tributary of the River Odra (German Oder); about 200,000 to 250,000 Kašubs settling on the lower Vistula and a few hundred Pomorze Slovenes around Lake Leba on the Baltic coast. Traces of the former original Slav population in this part of Germany are retained to the present day in the names of a large number of German towns and rivers.

The peoples of Czechoslovakia suffered a different fate. As early as the year 623 part of the Czecho-Moravian tribes achieved state unification. The German feudal barons who coveted the rich Czech lands could not reconcile themselves to the idea of the national independence of the Czecho-Moravians. They began a series of campaigns that were successful until the year 818 when the Czecho-Moravian tribes threw off their yoke. Even then the Germans did not abandon their plans to lay a predatory hand on the Czech people.

During succeeding centuries the Germans constantly attacked the lands of the Czech people and periodically held them in their power. The heroic Czech people, however, never laid down their arms, but continued to defend their liberty, their native language and culture and their national and state independence. In the course of the fierce struggle of the whole people against the foreign invaders, the Czechs developed into a powerful economic and political force which not only succeeded in putting an end to the German invasions but also threw off the hated German yoke. By the XIV century Bohemia had become one of the leading European powers. Prague had become a centre of European culture while its University, the first in Central Europe, was founded in 1348 and was the home of the cultural reformation and of democratic ideas. The great role played in the history of Bohemia by the movement connected with the name of Jan Huss and his followers, the Taborites, is well-known. Like every other expression of the spiritual development of the Slavs this movement's bitterest enemies were the Germans. It was drowned by German invaders in a sea of blood and Bohemia came under the power of the Austrian Hapsburgs.

In 1618 the Czech people replied to the colonization of the German invaders by a mighty insurrection which in 1620 was cruelly suppressed by the Hapsburgs at the battle of Biela Gora. The Czech people were doomed to slavery and oppression under the detested Germans and the once flourishing country underwent a rapid decline. Bohemia became one of the provinces of the Austro-German feudal, serf-owning monarchy. The three hundred years rule of the German drill sergeant was established in the land of Huss. This domination, however, was never fully attained. Despite all the cunning German plans for the denationalization of the Czechoslovak people, the latter from the end of the XVIII century conducted and organized struggle for national emancipation under their progressive leaders. Surmounting all obstacles placed in their way by the Germans who did not hesitate to incite national hatred in Czechoslovakia, the patriots confidently continued their struggle. The revolution in Bohemia was organized by the progressive democrats of the Czecho-Moravian and Slovak peoples and led by Professor Masaryk and

Dr. Eduard Beneš. It developed under the influence of the Great October Socialist Revolution in Russia and led to the liberation of the peoples of Czechoslovakia from the Austro-Hungarian yoke in 1918 and to the establishment of an independent democratic republic. Together with their Czech brothers the Slovak people gained their freedom and both nations were united in the Czechoslovak Republic.

In 1939, the German fascist aggressors began their insolent armed offensive against the Czechoslovak people, trampled underfoot the national liberty and state independence of Czechoslovakia and occupied the country. The five succeeding years were years of plunder, rapine and massacre of the Czechoslovak people and the destruction of their cultural treasures.

The Czechoslovak people responded to the atrocities of the Hitlerites by sabotage, acts of vengeance and a fresh consolidation of their forces. A Czechoslovak national military force, formed on the territory of the U.S.S.R., joined battle against the German fascists and won undying glory; a treaty of friendship and close military alliance was concluded between Czechoslovakia and the U.S.S.R., the most powerful of the Slav states. When the Red Army reached the Czechoslovak frontier in the spring of 1944, its arrival was greeted by the Czechoslovak people and their leaders as a sign of the forthcoming liberation of this beautiful country from the German fascist yoke.

The first steps of the Polish people within the framework of their own national state were made in the course of fierce defensive fighting against the German emperors. The young Polish state was not strong enough to withstand the Germans and for a time fell under their domination. From that time on, the whole history of Poland has been one of long and stubborn struggle against their German oppressors with their constant malicious intrigues and provocations, the most prominent of which has been the inciting of the Poles against their Slav brothers in the East.

At the same time, it was this struggle against the Germans which brought the freedom-loving Slav peoples together. In the XIII and XIV centuries, when the Germans increased their pressure on Poland and seized a number of Polish

provinces (Kujawy, Pomorze, Ziemia Dobrzyńska), cut off Poland from the Baltic coast and began to advance farther, the idea of an alliance with other neighbouring peoples who were also threatened with German aggression grew stronger in the minds of Polish patriots. At the famous battle of Grünwald in 1410, the united forces of the Poles, Lithuanians, Russians, Ukrainians, Byelorussians and Czechs dealt a mortal blow at the Teutonic Order, the outpost of the German feudal militarists.

In the XVIII century, German aggression again threatened Poland. The notorious Polish king August II, former Elector of Saxony (1697—1733), who seized the Polish throne by bribery and deception, three times proposed to Sweden, Prussia and Austria that they should divide Poland amongst themselves. By splitting the unity of the Polish people it would be easier to enslave and then destroy them—such was the plan of the German invaders. In this they eventually succeeded. As a result of three consecutive partitions of Poland (in which tsarist Russia was an interested party) occurring in 1772, 1793 and 1795, Prussia seized rich and extensive Polish provinces (the so-called Royal Prussia, Poznań and part of Silesia and Mazowia), densely populated by an energetic and industrious people. On these captured territories the Germans carried out their policy of denationalization. Prussian landlords, side by side with the Austro-Germans, began to plunder the Polish cultivators. The system of organized terror which the German invaders employed against the Polish people was calculated to gradually abolish the Polish elements and replace them by Germans. The Poles were deprived of the right of participation in the government; the Polish language was replaced by German in all institutions; Polish peasants had to submit to the Prussian feudal regime. Polish towns were flooded with German merchants and artisans who enjoyed extensive privileges and the support of the German government. Every attempt to secure liberty was brutally suppressed. The popular revolts of the Poles in 1830, 1833, 1846 and 1848 were drowned by Prussia and Austria in the people's blood. It was not for nothing that Bismarck, scared by these insurrections, stated in 1848 that Poland was the "traditional mortal enemy of

Germany". He called on his fellow countrymen to deal mercilessly with the Poles frightening them with the statement that "a restored Poland would defeat the best (sic!) strivings of Prussia".

When in the seventies of the last century the wave of imperialist Pan-Germanism swept through every section of German philistine society, the expression of the Prussian policy with regard to the Polish people living in Poznań, East Prussia and Silesia was the vulgar, typically Bismarckian slogan: "destroy" ("ausrotten"). Bismarck would have liked to destroy all the Poles, not only those subjected to Germany, but also those abroad (the former so-called Polish kingdom), seize their territory and colonize it with Germans.

The Polish people opposed their indomitable spirit, their love for their country and for freedom to the German denationalization plans. In numerous revolts they demonstrated their unbending will to independence. This struggle, however, which was headed by leaders whose names have rightly found a place of honour in the golden book of humanity, was frequently paralysed by the treachery of the nobility (szlachta) and did not lead to positive results. The role played by the anti-popular demoralizing elements was fatal for Poland and finally prepared the way for that bloody tragedy of which the Poles have been the victim for the last five years.

The young Polish Republic established after the first World War in 1919, by the great pressure brought to bear by a people who were hungering for liberty and independence soon fell into the hands of hypocritical demagogues from the reactionary clique. They hurled Poland into a fratricidal war against Russia in 1920, they supported the old, clumsy, long outworn prejudices against the great fraternal Slav people, the Russians. Striving to retain their rule over Ukrainian and Byelorussian lands that had been seized by force, these reactionaries betrayed the Polish people by subordinating Poland's foreign policy to Berlin. By serving German fascism they were actually preparing the attack on Poland and the seizure of the country.

The Hitlerites, however, were mistaken in thinking they could subdue the Pol-

ish people. When the first German guns were fired, Poland's finest citizens rose in defence of their country. Betrayed by their pro-fascist government they were compelled to retreat under pressure of the invaders' greatly superior forces. When Hitler's "new order" was set up in Poland, no repressions could break the will of the Polish patriots. A patriotic movement spread rapidly amongst the Poles living on the territory of the U.S.S.R. Thanks to the friendly help which the Soviet Government afforded the Union of Polish Patriots in the U.S.S.R., a Polish Army was set up on Soviet territory. The officers and men of divisions bearing the names of Kościuszko, Dąbrowski and Traugutt, are joined in militant brotherhood with the Red Army.

As a result of the victories of the Red Army, with whom the Polish divisions are fighting shoulder to shoulder, the decisive battles for the liberation of Poland began in the summer of 1944. July 1944 will be remembered as an important date in the history of Poland: in the days when victorious battles were being fought for Chelm and Lublin, the Polish National Council announced the formation of a Polish Committee of National Liberation and the unification of the Polish Army of Resistance formed in their own country with the Polish Army formed in the U.S.S.R. In its manifesto to the Polish people the Polish Committee stated:

"An enduring alliance with our immediate neighbours—the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia—will be the fundamental principle of Polish foreign policy, the policy to be pursued by the Polish Committee of National Liberation.

"The brotherhood-in-arms, hallowed by the blood shed in the joint fight against German aggression, will still further cement the friendship and strengthen the alliance with Great Britain and the United States of America."

Charles, whom the Germans consider "great", and his immediate successors, after several decades of devastating war against the Southern Slavs, subdued the Slovenes and laid their mailed fist on the Croats, a Slav people. Living in the north-western corner of the Balkan Peninsula and totalling

altogether about two million people, these Slovenes, a tiny Slav people, displayed an example of astonishingly staunch and courageous resistance to German force.

The Slovenes lost their national state independence in the IX century and came first under the German and, later, under the Austro-Hungarian yoke. Only in 1918, after the defeat of the German imperialist bloc, did the Slovenes become part of united Yugoslavia. During their many centuries of slavery and stubborn struggle against their oppressors (we would recall here the glorious struggle of the Slovene peasants against the Austro-German feudal barons in the XV century), the Slovene people became neither German nor Hungarian slaves and were not eliminated as a nation from the ethnographic map of Europe. In this instance, history shows how the Slav people grow and become spiritually stronger in the struggle against their oppressors. The Slovenes have a very rich literature while the university in the capital of Ljubljana, a number of other higher educational institutions, a fine national museum and their own Academy of Sciences—all testify to the cultural development of the Slovene people.

The Croatian people lost their independence somewhat later than the Slovenes, falling under the Hungarian yoke in the XII century. On many occasions they determinedly repulsed the Hapsburgs' attacks on their culture. This struggle resulted in the development of a strong movement for Croatian national liberation in the middle of the XIX century, the creation of a rich literature, a university and an Academy of Sciences. The Croatian people was the most economically and politically progressive of the South Slav peoples and in 1918 they took the initiative in establishing independent Yugoslavia.

Other Slav peoples of the Balkan Peninsula, amongst them the heroic Serbs, also fell victims to the predatory appetite of the German imperialists. As early as 1876, at the time of the Austrian occupation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the barbaric German attack on Serbia began. The rule of the Austrian Germans in these districts took on the character of open terror and the plunder and oppression of the local people. 5

The invaders used various excuses to plunder the Bosnians and Herzegovinians of their land and robbed them of the right to self-government which they won in armed struggle from the Turks. In response to Serbia's protests, Austria declared an economic war and gathered all the foreign trade, railway construction and industry of the country into her own hands. In 1908, Austria, supported by Germany, finally annexed Bosnia and Herzegovina. In 1912, Austro-German imperialism openly began preparations for the employment of armed force against Serbia and the whole of the Balkan peninsula, thereby clearing the way to the Iranian oilfields and the Persian Gulf. The Serbian people began to gather their forces to defend themselves against the German invaders.

On July 23rd, 1914, Austro-Hungary presented Serbia with an ultimatum, insolent both in tone and content. The Serbian people courageously and staunchly set out to meet the plunderers and in the first battles, in August 1914, struck some heavy blows at the Austrian troops. The Austrians were defeated and 50,000 prisoners were taken. The second offensive in September ended just as pitifully for the Austrians; the end came in December with the complete collapse of the Austrian army. The third offensive in December 1915 also resulted in a disgraceful collapse, when 66,000 officers and men were taken prisoner and considerable booty was captured by the Serbians. The enraged Austro-Germans gathered a huge army of 500,000 men and hurled it at the weak Serbian forces, already worn out by eighteen months' continuous fighting. Then the Serbian command adopted the only course open to it under the conditions obtaining—that of retaining their forces intact by retreating to Montenegro and Albania. This was more than a tragic retreat of the Serbian army: the whole Serbian people, men, women and children retreated before the advance of an enemy prepared to stop at nothing. People died by the thousand from unbelievable fatigue, cold and hunger, from the brutal cruelties and atrocities of the enemy. German airmen cold-bloodedly machine-gunned women and children. The Serbian people, however, did not surrender. They replied to the invader's rule of senseless terror by

joining up with the partisan forces and by ruthless vengeance on the enemy. Eventually, the Serbian people recovered and re-mustered their fighting forces, and in a common front with the allies, smashed their enemies and ignominiously drove them from the country. This victory presents a brilliant page in the history of the gallant Serbian people.

Although the Hapsburgs, Hohenzollerns, Hindenburgs and Ludendorffs disappeared from the scene, predatory German imperialism still continued gathering forces for its campaign in the East. Hitler arrived on the scene. The fascist hordes moved against the Slav peoples, following the road of the old Teutonic "cur-knights" of the Middle Ages.

The Hitlerites seized Bohemia, Poland and Yugoslavia by treachery and force.

Hitlerite imperialism dared to make an attempt on the life and liberty of the greatest of the Slav people, the Russian people, the pride of the multinational Soviet state.

In the struggle against German aggression in its most monstrous form, that of fascism, all the Slav peoples have demonstrated to the world their spiritual force and fine fighting qualities.

The whole world follows with admiration the epic struggle of the peoples of Yugoslavia who have achieved iron unity under the leadership of Marshal Tito in the bitter fight against fascist Germany.

Neither by terror nor guile did the Germans succeed in breaking the freedom-loving peoples of Poland and Czechoslovakia. The martial spirit of the Poles and Czechs has come to the fore both in the stubborn struggle against the invaders and in open battle on the Soviet-German front in the ranks of the Polish Army and the Czechoslovak National Force. The formation of these military forces on the territory of the Soviet Union is a demonstration of Soviet solidarity with the Slav peoples fighting for their independence.

The victories of the Soviet Union over Hitler Germany and her satellites have played an historical role in this struggle of the Southern and Western Slavs, the comrades-in-arms of the great anti-Hitler powers, the U.S.S.R., the U.S.A. and Great Britain.

The formation of a new, strong and democratic Polish state will not only ensure real independence for reborn Poland, but will also serve the common cause of all the nations united in the struggle against Hitlerism.

The Slav peoples, tempered in the battles against their age-old enemies, the German invaders, have now enriched the history of this stern struggle with new and great examples of soli-

darity, courage and gallantry on the field of battle. Once again in these difficult years the spirit of the Slavs has come to the fore, a spirit which in its national struggle and in the creation of material and spiritual treasures has always been inspired by the ideals of liberty and happiness for the whole of mankind.

NIKOLAI DERZHAVIN,
Academician

VICHY CONCENTRATION CAMPS FROM THE INSIDE

What I am about to put down in writing I know from the inside and not from hearsay, as I have had, to my misfortune, about two years practical experience of the Vichy "government's" concentration camps.

When, on June 22nd, 1941, the Germans attacked the U.S.S.R. I was living in Paris. That same day I fled from there to that zone of France which the Germans termed "unoccupied", and which Frenchmen referred to as "free". With much difficulty and risk I managed to cross the line of demarcation between these two zones, under the very noses of the German patrols—thanks to the help of French patriots in the occupied zone. But these patriots had warned me to beware of the Vichy police: "Keep away from them. In the occupied zone our police are patriotic and take part in our fight against the Germans. But in the unoccupied zone they obey all orders given them by the Germans, and arrest their own compatriots, even if the latter are policemen."

All this I was soon to learn for myself directly upon my arrival in Vichy where I hoped to get in touch with our embassy.

I arrived in Vichy on the very day when, by German orders, the Laval-Pétain "government" severed diplomatic relations with the U.S.S.R. That evening our whole embassy, en bloc, left Vichy. The police arrested me in a bus the morning I arrived in Vichy. I was taken into custody without being charged or questioned merely because I held a Soviet passport. I demanded to be immediately allowed to get in touch with our embassy by telephone. I was told that the matter would be attended to without me, but nothing was done. All my documents and iden-

tification papers were taken from me and, together with five other Russians who had been placed under arrest—two of whom were staff members of our embassy—I was marched under convoy to the station attached to the chief police commissariat of Vichy. Here I was confined in a cell for a whole week, without once being questioned, after which I was transferred to the Le Ver-net concentration camp.

We were searched at the station and all our cash, our watches, ties, collars, braces and even shoelaces were taken away. At night we were locked up in a windowless basement cell lit by a lamp suspended from the ceiling. There were no beds; along the cell wall, about four metres long, stood several low wooden bunks. We were given neither mattresses, straw nor blankets, and slept on the bare boards.

Every evening one or two prisoners would be hustled into our cell—petty thieves, murderers or drunkards. These would spend the night here, to be removed to prison next morning. They were all badly beaten up by the police during their arrest and interrogation and they would lay groaning all night long.

During the day we were led to an upstairs common room with policemen in it. Without exception they were always drunk and by evening could hardly stand on their feet. The gaoler, who used to lead us to and from our cell, was particularly drunk. His hand trembled and he had trouble in finding the keyhole. One day he brought a drunkard from the streets. But he himself was so drunk that it was hard to tell which of the two was the prisoner. After poking his shaking finger all around the key-

hole, the gaoler handed the key to the prisoner, saying: "Here, open it yourself!" The pair of them spent a good half hour trying to fit the key into the hole until at last they opened the door.

Next to our cell was the torture chamber. In order that the cries of pain should not be heard, the police gagged their victims. But sometimes a victim would escape from their grip and then the whole place would echo to their wild shouts. The policemen manhandled their victims in silence, hitting them with their fists, with truncheons or sticks, or kicking them savagely with their hobnailed boots.

They tried to provoke us too, in order to find an excuse for beating us up, but we refused to be drawn.

Not once were we interrogated, nor were any charges levelled against us. After a week several gendarmes entered our cell, handcuffed us in pairs and conveyed us on foot right across the town to the railway station, refusing to tell us where we were being taken to and why. After twenty-four hours of weary travelling by train we arrived at the Camp Le Vernet—notorious as a strict disciplinary camp in the department of Ariens, near the Spanish border. Here I spent five months.

There were about one hundred thousand people in French concentration camps in July 1941—French anti-fascists, Russians, Belgian and Polish soldiers interned by demand of the Germans, and other prisoners. In the Camp Le Vernet alone there were more than thirty different nationalities.

These fascist concentration camps had been set up as early as 1939 by the Daladier government. In February the Spanish Republican army of four hundred thousand strong which had crossed the border, was interned in these camps. But the "efflorescence" of these camps began in September 1939, i.e. at the beginning of the war. By decree of the Daladier government in July 1939 the prefects of departments received the right to put into concentration camps—for indefinite periods and without trial or indictment—all persons "dangerous to public order or state security". Decisions of these prefects were final, and subject neither to appeal nor protest. The Russians were the first to suffer from this decree.

Those who read French reactionary newspapers of those days will remember the frenzied campaign the press launched against the U.S.S.R. Though France was at war with Germany and not with the U.S.S.R. the stings of the French fascist press were aimed more against the Soviet Union than against nazi Germany.

In September 1939 practically all the members of the Soviet friendly organization of Russian emigrants, "The Repatriation Union", were arrested in Paris. Many of them were kept imprisoned for a considerable time and then sent to concentration camps. One of the members of this organization told me that in the Santé prison in Paris, whenever the alert signal was sounded, he could always hear the gaolers dashing downstairs to the bomb-shelter, leaving the prisoners in their cells.

A Russian Jew of seventeen, a native of Byelorussia, was arrested by the fascists in October 1939 and thrown into a concentration camp because he had been calling at the Soviet consulate to enquire about his return to the U.S.S.R. This unfortunate young man was kept in the concentration camp for four years!

In 1940, when the Germans were nearing Paris, the Russians and other anti-fascists were transferred from the camps in the north of France to that at Le Vernet. En route, when the train halted at a station, the gendarmes conveying the prisoners told the local population that those were German parachutists, and the innocent victims would be showered with curses and threats of violence on the part of the crowd.

But it was against the Russians that the Vichy "government" unleashed its greatest frenzy. On June 30th, 1941, the day the diplomatic relations with the U.S.S.R. were broken off, orders were issued for the arrest of all Russians living in France. When the prisoners were herded together the French authorities detained all Soviet citizens and those whiteguard emigrants who had gone over to the Soviet side, and imprisoned them in concentration camps.

The first thing that struck me on arriving at the Camp Le Vernet was that almost all the interned prisoners went around in shorts or in tatters. The pale faces and thin emaciated bodies of the

prisoners made the camp look more like a sanatorium for last-stage tubercular cases or cancer patients. There were 1,300 prisoners at the camp and they all looked more like living skeletons than human beings. Before a month had passed I was in no better condition than the rest. Our meals consisted of 275 grams of slack bread a day, 250 grams of thin barley porridge in the morning and half a litre of hot soup twice a day—water with a few leaves of cabbage, or bits of fodder beet or pumpkin floating in it. Once a week we were given a small piece of meat and a bit of cheese. All this totalled about 1,100 calories a day (the normal minimum calory requirement for a working person being 2,800). Those who received no parcels from outside, or who had no money to purchase food at the local shop, or secretly elsewhere (and they were the overwhelming majority) simply died of starvation. The camp hospital, which accommodated 250 patients, was always overcrowded with serious cases. In the first three months of my life there, from July to September, fifty people, most of them young, died at the camp. The corpses were brought to the graveyard in the same waggon that would bring products to the camp. A young Russian doctor from Western Ukraine was the camp's gravedigger. Interned physicians were not allowed to practice medicine. House painters, locksmiths, carpenters and sometimes pharmacists would serve as medical attendants.

As a result of undernourishment almost all inmates suffered from polyuria, discharging urine every $1\frac{1}{2}$ —2 hours, waking up five or six times during the night to urinate. Many suffered from swollen legs, swollen gums and loosening of teeth. I was witness of several cases of insanity as a consequence of undernourishment: the unfortunate victims would burst out in a frenzy of imprecations against everyone around, showing no signs, however, of violence. Death would come within two—three days. Often in the morning they would be found dead in the barracks: they had passed out so quietly that even the man next to them heard nothing during the night.

The camp was guarded by a squad of gendarmes and 150 gardes civiles—

under the peace terms the French had no right to keep soldiers under arms. For the purpose of guarding the camps they enlisted the scum and dregs—people unsuited for any kind of work, or mere vagrants. These went around in worn and dirty old clothes, their only insignia of office being a revolver belted round their jackets, making them look more like highway robbers than sentry-guards.

And robbers they were. They were proud of the opportunity of showing their superiority over unarmed people who had been placed wholly in their power. They were utterly unconcerned with the fact that we were Soviet citizens, anti-fascists, fighting Germany. They themselves showered curses on the Germans and on their own chiefs, but showed not the least wish to take up arms against nazi Germany, though many of them had had a taste of a German war-prison. They practiced on us all the brutal methods the Germans had applied to them. They were typical French petits-bourgeois, who had easily and readily assimilated Jean Giono's formula: "Better to be a slave than dead". Psychologically they were an exact copy of their masters—the rulers of Vichy. The latter gave them a means of subsistence, not much, true, but still something: they received a mere 1,100 francs a month, of which 600 were deducted for their board. Finding no employment after demobilization, they hired themselves out as gaolers.

There were no authorities to whom we could complain of ill-treatment—our complaints were either held back or entirely ignored. Sentries or gendarmes were not punished for killing an inmate. The real commander of the camp was Ludmann, a police commissioner, an outright fascist who bitterly hated us, Russians. One day, when a colonel was expected to visit the camp, we were warned at the morning roll-call not to complain or we should be thrown into prison.

The inmates consisted mainly of anti-fascists, mostly citizens of the United Nations. But no small number of criminals were deliberately placed in the camp for the purpose of compromising us in the eyes of the local population and to cleave our unity.

All persons suspected of sympathizing with the Germans were put into con-

centration camps. This description was interpreted to include, in the first place, Russians, though the idiocy of the pretext was obvious. Again, under Pétain, all Russians (and others as well) who championed the fight against Germany or who actively joined in this fight by enlisting in the French army, were thrown into concentration camps. Here one could meet people accused of "counter-acting war" and people accused of trying to continue the war. Soviet citizens were thrown into camp together with Russian whiteguard emigrants who, more often than not, were bitter enemies of the Soviet Union.

No one was allowed to see the dossiers of those interned. By chance I happened to see the file referring to the case of a Spanish school teacher interned in July 1941, and under the column: "Reason for being interned" was the one word: "None." One day a Russian boy aged fifteen was put into the same barracks where I was. The lad had no idea why he was there. One of the staff members of our embassy was also in the same camp. His dossier stated: "Suspected of maintaining relations with the Soviet embassy." And yet he had openly stated that he had been a staff member of the embassy!

In 1940, when the Germans neared the South of France the Vichy authorities made a "beau geste" by proposing to the interned that their dossiers be destroyed to prevent them from falling into German hands... Many members of the International Brigade and, in particular, Russians from Western Ukraine and Byelorussia had fought in Spain under assumed names. In the end the Germans did not advance as far as Vernet, and the "International brigaders" remained without documents. Later, when many of them who had obtained entry visas to America, asked for their release, they were told that they could not be released as their dossiers had been destroyed and that there were no means of ascertaining the reason for their having been interned.

In 1942 the Vichy "government", by orders of the Germans, stopped issuing exit visas from France, even to those who already had entry visas to America or Mexico.

10 That same year Vichy passed a law under which escape from camp was

punishable by a two to five year prison sentence. In other words, people could be taken into custody without any law, but attempts to escape were punishable by law.

Still, many tried to escape from the camps. There were several such cases at the Camp Le Vernet. Once the gendarmes discovered a fugitive hiding under the barbed wire. The fugitive could easily have been taken with bare hands. But the gendarmes shot him in cold blood. People arrested in camp for some slight misdemeanour were often beaten up in prison. Internees had to stand at attention and bare their heads when addressing a mere "brigadier" (a sergeant).

In December 1941 a group of internees, myself included, consisting mainly of Soviet citizens, was sent to Jelfa camp in North Africa, on the Atlas Plateau, about 350 kilometres south of Algiers. We travelled in the hold of a cargo boat, which usually carried sheep to Africa. We slept on the bare floor, in small box cells which ordinarily served for livestock. We were not allowed on deck, and at night were not even permitted to use the privy, which was on deck. It can easily be imagined what our livestock enclosures looked like in the morning.

We had heard about Jelfa before, as one of the most frightful camps. But reality exceeded all imagination. Jelfa camp was "opened" to aliens in March 1941. At first there were no structures whatever. On the slope of a bare hill, facing north, in an enclosure fenced in with three rows of barbed wire stood rows of flimsy tents, in which we slept, right on the ground. At first we were not given any straw to spread under us, so we spread one blanket on the cold earth and covered ourselves with the second. We were not allowed to have more than three blankets. In the summer, with the thermometer rising to 70° C. it was impossible to stay in the tent. We were tortured by myriads of flies which made reading, writing or any occupation impossible. In the winter, with the frost reaching 10—12° C. below zero, sleeping in the tent was no better than spending the night out in the open. At night a cold and gusty wind would often tear up the tent pegs, bringing the canvas down on our heads. In pitch darkness,

our fingers numbed with cold, we had to get up and rig up the tent again. No fires or lights were allowed inside the tents. Violation of such orders was punished by imprisonment. We spent the whole of the first winter in these flimsy tents. For weeks on end we would shiver with cold. Very often, on waking in the morning we would find our blankets covered with snow.

On particularly frosty days the camp chiefs seemed to derive especial pleasure by repeating, at morning roll-call, that bonfires were strictly prohibited on the territory of the camp.

We had nowhere to wash in the camp, and had to go to a small stream about one hundred metres from the camp, to wash. In the beginning there were no shower-baths and we became infested with lice. In a letter to someone outside one of our inmates complained about the fact that there were no shower-baths in the camp. For this complaint the camp commandant threw him into a cell for fifteen days. Six months later a bath-house was built—eight showers for 1,100 people!

In June 1942 we were transferred to barracks which we ourselves had built. A commission which visited the camp declared the barracks unfit even for poultry. Yet we spent about a year in them...

The barracks were built of unbaked bricks and plastered on the outside. The plaster soon peeled off. The roof was of boards, and the rain poured in through the cracks between them. There were only eight windows on a frontal of fifty metres, and even those were without glass, but nailed up with board. There was complete darkness inside. We slept huddled together on narrow bunks built in upper and lower rows. The average space per person was 6 cub. metres. The whole place seethed with vermin. Old tins filled with olive oil served as wick-lamps. The oil was bought in town and smuggled into the camp, as we were not allowed to make any purchases in town. Internees caught smuggling anything into camp were thrown into prison for two weeks, and the smuggled goods confiscated. Everything had to be bought in the camp canteen, and the profits, which amounted to a considerable sum, were supposed to go towards improvement in our food rations. But

instead, all the profits were pocketed by the commandant.

Everything in the camp was personally supervised by commandant Caboche, an officer of the 2nd Bureau, an outright fascist. Caboche nursed particular animosity against the Russians. Twice a day he made the rounds of the camp, accompanied by a huge dog and his adjutant, Sergeant Gravelle, who was always in a state of intoxication. In his hands Caboche held a whip with which he mercilessly lashed anyone whom he disliked. Once he happened to catch one of our companions—a Ukrainian by the name of G., who had served in the International Brigade—just as he was lighting a fire inside the tent. He whipped him savagely, and then threw him into prison. G. was later repatriated together with us to the U.S.S.R. where he enlisted in the Kościuszko Division. He distinguished himself in action and was wounded. The Soviet government conferred on him the title of Hero of the Soviet Union and decorated him with the Order of Lenin.

This Caboche resorted to every means by which he might grow rich on the camp. He made big profits on our food. The French treasury allowed us eleven francs a day for meals. According to our calculations the market price of the food we actually received was no more than five or six francs a day. On 1,100 internees this economy yielded Caboche a juicy daily income of about 5,000 francs. Besides this he organized several commercial enterprises—a brick works, stone quarries, a soap-making plant, a smithy, nailery shop, carpenter shop, tannery, boot shop, rope- and sack-making, etc. He also supplied labour for local enterprises and himself pocketed the wages earned by the workers. All these enterprises were staffed by camp internees. We ourselves built all the camp buildings—barracks, a house for the camp office, a factory, the kitchen, etc. Up to June 1942 the wages for an eight-hour working day was... 150 grams of bread. In the second half of 1942 cash wages were introduced: 20 francs a day. But of this Caboche withheld 10 francs for improving meals, 5 francs were credited to each internee's account and only 5 francs paid out in cash. In view of inadequate nutrition (we received not more than 1,200 ca-

lories a day) work was very exhausting. One fine day Caboche announced that the food ration of all those not working would be cut down. Faced with the alternative of dying of starvation, everyone had to work. There was no improvement whatever in our food rations, but the extra 150 grams of bread made a big difference.

In January 1942 Chatelle, Governor-General of Algiers, arrived to make an inspection of the camp. All preparations had been made: several roasted lambs, potatoes, oranges, figs—all sorts of good things which we had not seen for many months, were brought to the camp kitchen. Everyone was happy at the thought of at least once having a good, hearty meal. Chatelle arrived, and on entering the kitchen began admonishing Caboche for feeding us too well. To which the latter hypocritically replied: "But they are working and one must feed them well." Chatelle took his departure and an hour after he had gone a waggon arrived and carted off all the good food that had been brought. That day we received our usual watery soup and beans.

On Christmasday of 1942 and on New Year's eve, under pretext of punishment, Caboche cancelled the holiday dinner, and our meals those two days were worse than usual.

Stealing was rife in all the concentration camps and the internees never got even the miserable rations they were supposed to.

Internees were thrown into prison cells for the slightest infringement of rules—for lighting fires, for smuggling in food to the camp, etc. These cells, $2\frac{1}{2} \times 1\frac{1}{4}$ metres, contained a cement "bed" with a cement head-rest. There was a small, barred window, without glass, through which the icy, damp air streamed in; no space to move about to keep freezing limbs warm. No lights allowed, no smoking, reading or writing. Half a litre of water a day, for washing and drinking. No privy—the cell floor serving for this purpose. The prison ration was 150 grams of bread and a reduced ration of watery soup. Prisoners were allowed to have only one blanket. Each cell was for two to three prisoners. There was not enough room to sit, let alone sleep. After three days of such incarceration the prisoners usually had to

be removed to hospital. Caboche would make the rounds of the cells whipping the prisoners. He had me put into a prison cell for 17 days merely, as he said, "because you are a Russian and a doctor, and that's why you are to go to prison". More than half of the Soviet group in our camp had been sentenced to prison on one pretext or another.

It was useless lodging complaints against Caboche. He read all the correspondence of the camp inmates and naturally withheld all complaints against himself. Nor, for that matter, did Caboche's superiors answer any of our complaints which happened to reach them. He had a whole staff of stool-pigeons in the camp, who spied on the internees.

At definite periods Caboche would have us all weighed, to prove that we were not losing weight while interned. That we did not lose weight was solely thanks to the fact that our collective organization kept us regularly supplied with cash and food parcels. All the members of our collective group pooled half of the money and products they received from outside. This food was shared out between all. Often enough Caboche held back the money sent to us by relief organizations as for instance the money sent to us by English and American Quakers.

In England and America democratic circles launched a big campaign, demanding the release of all anti-fascists interned in fascist concentration camps in North Africa. Once, when I asked Caboche's secretary why, despite Admiral Darlan's statement that all citizens of the United Nations had been released, we Soviet citizens were still kept interned in camp, he insolently replied:

"I don't know whether the U.S.S.R. is a member of the United Nations."

We were released in April 1943, when a Soviet Commission sent by the People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs to Algiers visited our camp. After resting in an English army camp, we were all repatriated to the U.S.S.R.

Never shall we forget the horrible experiences suffered at the hands of Hitler's French imitators. We are certain that the day of retribution is not far off.

ALEXANDER RUBAKIN

DARE-DEVIL

This story, written six years ago, belongs to the previously unpublished works of the late Soviet prose-writer, Yuri Krymov, the author of *Tanker Derbent*, *The Engineer* and a number of short stories. In our No. 6, 1944, we published fragments from Krymov's letters to his wife and parents mailed from the front-line in the first year of this war and the story of his untimely death in the autumn of 1941.—Ed.

There was absolutely no shade and few amenities in the restaurant attached to the aquasports station. Swimmers clambered up the wooden stairs leading directly onto the restaurant terrace, flicking off the water from their dripping shoulders with the flat of their palms.

I chose a table at the edge of the terrace, overlooking the raised platform and the diving tower. From down below came the splash of water, the patter of bare feet and the creak of rowlocks.

A girl in a bathing costume was mounting the tower, her figure flashed intermittently through the wooden lattice-work. Stepping to the edge of the spring-board, she arched her slender figure and raised her arms above her head. On the platform below people with sun-tanned bodies threw back their heads to gaze at her, following her movements. With a springy motion the girl made a graceful swallow dive, raising a cloud of spray through which the sun created miniature rainbows.

Diving several times in succession, she paused each time on the spring-board casting a glance at the platform below and then letting her eyes roam to the restaurant terrace, as though waiting for the signal to dive. The swimmers seated at the tables turned and clapped their hands. But after a time her performance drew less and less attention.

A military man approached my table and asked whether he might sit down. The taut yellow strap crossing his chest, shone like a strip of polished steel. And he himself, with his correct military bearing, his unhasty but clipped movements, resembled a powerful steel spring, outwardly calm and serene, but ready to give with terrific hitting force. He

did not lounge with his elbows on the table, but slightly braced the edge of his palms against it. He glanced around him and unfolded a newspaper.

The girl again stood at the edge of the spring-board, pearly drops gleaming on her bare shoulders. She dawdled as usual and continued glancing down at the terrace. Laughter and the clink of glasses could be heard at the nearby tables. Applause broke out from the platform below, but this time it was caused by a stoutish man who had popped up from beneath the water with a coin gripped in his teeth.

With a toss of her head, the girl gauged the distance to the water. She eased her weight from one foot to another as if considering something. Suddenly she turned with her back to the water and edged her way to the tip of the board, knees slightly flexed. The people at the tables turned round to watch her. A canoe just rounding the station made a dead stop, oars uplifted. From the platform came anxious and uncertain voices:

"Better try it first from the lower platform..."

"Not straight from there... A-ah!"

The girl edged off the spring-board and fell in a backward dive. Somersaulting in the air, the body unflexed just as it hit the surface. But instead of the usual smooth splash this time there was a resounding smack, as though the water had been hit by a swinging blow from the flat of an oar.

Those on the platform below gave an exclamation of dismay, and the patter of running footsteps could be heard on the boards. My companion at the table quickly rose to his feet and strode to the stairs, unbuckling his belt as he went.

The water was foaming in a miniature funnel at the spot where the girl had hit the surface. Some of the swimmers had also risen to their feet and were looking downwards. The girl's head broke water, right near the platform. She gripped the edge of the boards and made a wry grimace as she wiped the water from her eyes. The military man leaned over and stretched out his hand to her. They stood now on the platform, side by side, and I could hear the angry rumble of his voice raised in expostulation. Then he came back to the terrace.

"She's laughing, and that means she hasn't hurt herself," he remarked as he returned to the table. "But she could just as easily have cracked herself up, hitting the surface that way, flat..."

"But I hardly think you had any reason to scold her," I said in a reconciliatory tone. "Things like that are liable to happen to anyone. She's got grit anyway."

"Well, as for grit, I'd think twice before I'd say that," was his condescendingly smiling retort. "A dare-devil perhaps. A funny word that you seldom hear it nowadays. A dare-devil isn't aware of danger, or forgets it in the heat of the moment. This girl now, she realized her diving stunts no longer interested those young fellows over the way, so she wanted to surprise them with some stunt, to draw the attention of as many people as possible, even those she doesn't know. It was a far jump to the water, and pretty risky for a backward dive. True, she shut her eyes tight just before jumping off."

My military companion was no longer smiling; he shifted his chair closer to me, the leather of his belt creaking.

"There's no need for me to tell you how proud we all are of our good sportsmen and sportswomen. You know this yourself! It's we who inaugurated parachuting, the most difficult of all sports. The 'chutist never starts with a delayed jump; he is trained for the air gradually. Should he infringe discipline he would have his aerodrome pass taken from him. These are serious, trained and toughened boys... full of grit. I like that word, and that's why I use it so seldom. It may come in handy some time... Maybe sooner than we think!"

His expression became more and more concentrated, his glance immobile as though his thoughts were turned inward.

Then, suddenly, he spoke again in a lowered voice.

"There's a particular incident that I recall. It happened a long while back at the front during the 1914 World War. I was a machine-gunner then. When it comes to sheer grit, I really don't know what to say as far as I'm concerned. At first my heart was in my boots, with my finger-nails digging into the earth... At every explosion I went all sick inside—the end of everything, I thought. Then I calmed down a bit, began looking around me, and observing others. I discovered each soldier conducted himself in a different way. It was impossible to watch some of them, the way they dug their nails into the earth, groaned and moaned, their eyes popping out of their heads as they stared into the sky, waiting for the next explosion. Others laughed aloud or cursed, and shoved themselves halfway out of the trenches. This kind had darting eyes and hands and feet always aimlessly on the move. Eventually I ceased this habit of observing others' faces. I came to understand that courage has no external features.

"My machine-gun assistant was a plain sort of chap. An ordinary, simple and painstaking fellow. He tinkered around with the machine-gun till he knew its every screw by heart. He took every opportunity to clean and oil it, and in battle he was never behindhand in feeding up fresh cartridge belts. He never poked his head over the top needlessly and was always very particular about bandaging the least scratch on his body. He was a fellow of few words, never complaining; nevertheless his eyes were filled with the same anguish and fear as I had observed in others.

"The machine-gun is a powerful fighting weapon—the mainstay and firing basis of infantry battle. I was reckoned a pretty good gunsighter, but if you ask me, this depended largely on my mate... I lost him eventually... And here's how it happened.

"The enemy had been pounding our trenches with shells for several hours on end. The front of our machine-gun nest was camouflaged with a dead horse. Looking from ahead there seemed to be no trenches here at all, only mounds of scorched and smoking earth. The enemy went into attack, lines of men

racing along, stumbling in the ruts and holes and hoarsely shouting all the while. I gripped the machine-gun and pressed the trigger. It kicked in my hands as it digested the cartridge belt and spat lead. In the trenches behind something clicked twice, followed by a drumming explosion. The chains of enemy soldiers rolled ahead like an avalanche, to be mown down and replaced by new lines of running figures. As they leapt across the dead bodies, they still kept up their monotonous howl, like so many robots. My mate lay flat on his stomach, feeding the cartridge belt into the gun's maw. At times he raised his head, his lips muttering. No sounds could be heard but I knew the cheering and meaningless word he kept on repeating: "Nichevo! Nichevo!"¹

"As far as I can remember, it was raining. Everything ahead was misty, and warm water was dripping from the machine-gun casing. The enemy attack petered out as suddenly as it had started. The Germans turned back and were swallowed up in the mist. But they had spotted our gun nest... their observer was obviously an expert at his job. How he could possibly have given the exact bearings of the target with such poor visibility is beyond me. The first shell burst behind us, its splinters hitting our gun shield. Then, just ahead, a fiery pillar of orange and black rocketed skywards, followed by an ear-splitting metallic explosion. I let go the cartridge belt and stupidly flung myself on the muzzle of our gun. My comrade, jerking my shoulder, shouted into my ear, as though I were deaf:

"Crawl to the right!"

"At that moment, I showed extraordinary agility. I crawled along flat on my stomach, squirming along like a lizard, flaying the skin off my palms. Some tree-stumps stood to the right. Turning my head, I saw my companion. Bending double, he was moving toward the trenches, hauling the machine-gun after him. Just then the enemy fired his third shell. The explosion stunned me for a moment, and when I recovered I found myself buried by clods of earth. I felt stifled and pain wracked my entire body. A kind of rag smouldered right in front of my eyes, and then as suddenly

disappeared. Night was falling. After a short while I rose to my feet and called out to my comrade. Circling around, I suddenly came across him. He lay near the machine-gun which had turned muzzle upward. His face, washed by the rain, gleamed white in the darkness. I continued calling him, unable to believe. . .

"He had remained true to the very end. He had saved the gunsight and had tried to save the gun. And that was how my little comrade died. He had not seen the year 1917 with its battles. But grit he certainly had..."

My military companion fell silent. He seemed to have grown tired and to have lost all desire to continue. Then suddenly throwing back his head, he resumed his story, speaking in the same low level tone:

"A little later we were sent back for a bit of rest. It was a new experience for me. One met odd varieties of military men on the streets. New shiny kneeboots, pink fingernails, perfume and what not. These dandies huddled up against the wall to give us the right of way, while we turned to follow them with our eyes, our feet catching in our greatcoats.

"I remember our platoon commander. A handsome looking and powerfully built man, who had left a large family somewhere at home. Here, away from the battle-line, he got awfully excited. He was always looking around, as though expecting to find old friends. His breath came short and he got a habit of spitting. He was constantly torn by a burning desire to be on the move. He was always followed around by a loose-limbed noisy young fellow—our observer. The latter jauntily wore his military cap flat on his head, with upturned peak. He had a way of guffawing in the streets and kicking up shindies in the shops. He was nicknamed 'Dare-Devil'. Strangely enough, I'd never noticed him before, in the trenches.

"Our machine-gun platoon was billeted in an abandoned house out of town. The front-line was not far distant, and the endless rumble of gunfire could be heard away in the west. Inside the house smelled musty and the parquet flooring creaked underfoot. The broken branches of apple-trees in the garden trailed the ground and in the evenings

¹ Russian for "never mind".—Ed.

the trees would be clustered with flocks of plump, well-fed jackdaws.

"We dragged piles of straw into the rooms and prepared to relax. Our restless platoon commander made interminable rounds of the rooms, examining the ornate furniture and flinging the doors open with a bang. In the empty library he aimed a shot at the ceiling and, biting his lips, stood watching the plaster strewing the parquet flooring with a coat of fine dust. The jackdaws on the tree-branches outside gave throat in alarm and took to headlong flight westwards. Dare-devil chuckled and rubbed his stomach gleefully.

"Discipline was growing lax. An officer would occasionally turn up, to efface himself again quickly. At sunset we would all yawn convulsively, but continued to go to bed very late. We took to card games. I never liked gambling, and still don't, but I remember that at that time I gambled a great deal and invariably lost. On the night before we were to be sent back to the front we played cards well into the small hours. Our platoon commander was in luck that night, and his impatient fingers kept tearing at the corners of the well-thumbed cards. Dare-Devil slowly looked through his hand, his face changed its expression and he gave a forced laugh. He was losing heavily. I was tired and cramped sitting so long at the table and as I rose to my feet Dare-Devil began turning out the contents of his pockets. The platoon commander threw down his cards and, with a huge yawn, said:

"No go! I don't play for I.O.U.'s. Tell you what? Play you for 'Twirl and Shoot'! My cash against your inheritance. . . But that's enough for tonight. Let's get some sleep."

"All this, of course, was said in jest. One or two men who had been hanging round the table watching the game, moved away. Dare-Devil threw a look at them and then cried out:

"It's a go! Who's afraid!?"

"The men crowded round the card table again, while others got up from their straw beds. Everyone knew what 'Twirl and Shoot' meant; whispers about this life-and-death stake went around the dugouts and trenches. Beyond a doubt this card gamble was an invention of the gentlemen officers. Anxiously knit-

ting his brows, the platoon commander flung a pile of banknotes onto the table—his stake in the game. Dare-Devil reached for his service revolver and bent over the table. Everyone saw him remove six cartridges, leaving the seventh in the drum. Nobody spoke a word. Dare-Devil then moved away to the window, pushed his cap well back off his forehead and twirled the drum of his pistol. Placing the muzzle against his temple, in a theatrical voice he called out:

"Good-bye, lads!"

"None of the boys spoke a word, and stood with brows knitted. The soldier by the window poked the pistol muzzle against his temple and shut his eyes tight. His face went white as a sheet. Then a faint click was heard and everyone sighed with relief. Dare-Devil approached the table, shovelled the pile of banknotes into his pocket and in a stuttering voice exclaimed:

"Now that's what I call real grit!.. I'd like to see anyone else try it!.."

"The men quickly broke up, still keeping silence. The platoon commander made a grimace, his mustache nervily twitching. He rose from his seat and in clipped and measured tones, said:

"Incidentally it's all sheer swinery and swank. And this is going to be the last time. . . Let's go to sleep. . ."

"He was red in the face, and wore a look as though he had been subjected to an insult. The boys wrapped themselves in their army-coats and avoided looking at each other. The lamp was turned down and after flickering once or twice, went out altogether. I turned restlessly from side to side, scattering the straw. Next to me someone was mumbling in an undertone, through his yawns:

"He ought to get it in the neck for a crazy thing like that. Does he think we're aristocrats, or what. . ."

"To which somebody replied, in an excited whisper:

"What the devil's difference does it make if tomorrow someone's got to die. But what's the use of flirting with the Old Hag before your time's up. . .?"

"I remember thinking of my comrade, killed in the machine-gun nest. Try as I might, I couldn't recall his face—only a white patch in the darkness. He had nothing externally striking by which to remember him, no dare-devil ways about

him. I only remember his figure as with his last ounce of strength he hauled the machine-gun from the nest, and the short words he barked out to me, words that saved my life: 'Crawl to the right!'

"Yes, much water has flown under the bridges during these past twenty years!

"But I still come across people in whom some fleeting trait, some gesture or glance immediately recalls things which should have been forgotten long ago. That girl, now, who was looking all around—I don't know whether she is capable of showing grit. After all, when it comes to the real thing it's hardly likely there'll be any onlookers. Only solitude, and the imperative necessity of choosing. . . either, or. . .

"I am now giving lessons to trainees—teaching them how to handle a machine-gun. One needs iron persistence and enthusiastic work to become a good gunsighter. And the boys compete with each other for better knowledge and careful attention to their guns. And they'll compete with each other in grit too. Maybe very soon. . ."

With a smile, my companion donned his cap again.

"I intended having a dip, and here I am gabbing away. It's the fault of that girl, the scatter-brained, reckless imp! She shows that trait, but let's hope it won't take root for want of proper soil to nourish it. We don't countenance such crazy things nowadays. . ."

1938.

Translated by Moss Muscatt

NIKOLAI ASSANOV

"NO CHANGES"

At 3 a.m. Senior Lieutenant Suslov was called to battalion headquarters. He sprang up immediately his name was called, shaking off all his weakness and desire to sleep as a man does who is nervously awaiting and to whom intuition whispers that the time has come. He came out of the dugout into the trench and saw above his head the pale sky of the hours before dawn and the rosy clouds in the east. He saw the motionless figures of the men at the observation post and looking carefully out of the trench, peered into the streaks of the fog which enveloped the lowland separating the two heights occupied by his company and an opposing German battalion.

Before leaving for headquarters Suslov gave orders to awake the twelve men selected for the dangerous operation in hand. He ordered them to be fed, their arms inspected and an extra supply of grenades given them before he returned. In Suslov's company everyone, including the commander himself, had learned long ago to carry out orders quickly and efficiently and so in three minutes Suslov was at headquarters and in ten minutes the twelve men were gathered in a separate dugout.

Included among the twelve were two from Suslov's home country, from the distant northern river Kolva in the Urals. They were Nesterov and Yershov, soldiers no longer young with long mustaches but no beards, former hunters, men close to the earth and masterhands at practically everything they undertook, middle-aged peasants who could, if necessary, build a log-cabin or make a pair of boots. There was the Muscovite Ushakov, a signalman, and his assistant Yegorov, a native of Kostroma, boys whom nothing could discourage and who had sometimes managed to lay two cables where it seemed impossible to get through even with one, lads who could find a cheery word and a hot meal where others could see neither houses nor smoke. They were younger than the rest and the others called them "sonny", which they found so offensive that it sometimes led almost to blows. Among the picked men were Valiullin's machine-gun crew, all three of them Tartars from Kazan, the mortar-gunners Minayev and Pastukhov and the three tommy-gunners who were known in the company as "the three Ivans" because they always stuck together and were all called Ivan. When volunteers were called up for some special task

they were in the habit of sending one of their number to sign up for the three. They did the same thing whenever extra food rations or presents and letters were handed round. Everybody in the company knew that any of the three had been given the right by his other two friends to represent all three Ivans—Kazakov, Skuratov and Orlov.

When these men had gathered in the dugout they were nearly all smiling but one could feel in their bearing a peculiar, almost solemn, sense of danger and a premonition of the difficult task that confronted them. They were acquainted with one another, had often been in operations together, had together seen their comrades carried off to hospital and sometimes to the grave, had together accepted newcomers into their ranks; whenever they were all called together in one group like this they felt in their bones that they were confronted by a dangerous task of gigantic proportions, the execution of which would demand all their effort and all their military prowess. They had not yet received orders so they tried not to speculate on what faced them because, like many brave men, they were of the confirmed opinion that to speak of success too early is an almost certain way of making it slip through your fingers. But signalman Ushakov's youth got the better of him and he hinted:

"Seems like we're in for a picnic on 'Pernicious' height. What do you think, Yegorov?"

"It would have been a lot more fun on the Lenin Hills in Moscow," answered Yegorov unwillingly.

Nesterov, who was the oldest of the lot and had earned a sergeant's stripes, said drily:

"Rooks and crows always croak before the rain."

Yershov, his friend, who was a terrible "philosopher" and loved to indulge in "clever" talks in his leisure time, chose this opportunity to once again disagree with Ushakov, making the following dissatisfied remark to nobody in particular:

"A wise hunter who's after a sable always says he wouldn't mind getting a hare. Old men know what they're talking about. Boasting doesn't make for a catch."

18 The "three Ivans" moved a tiny bit

away from the signalmen to emphasize their agreement with the old soldiers. Although they were offended, the signalmen said not a word, pretending to be busy at something. Ushakov examined the telephones, Yegorov carefully inspected a roll of wire to see whether, heaven forbid, the cable was tangled up somewhere; there is no time for inspection during battle. The other men, too, employed themselves in inspecting their weapons. Valiullin, who was not a very talkative man and was made bashful by his poor knowledge of Russian, said something to his assistants who went out and returned quickly with a bundle of machine-gun belts. Nesterov and Yershov, as though they had read each other's thoughts, got out their knapsacks and said something to the second-in-command who brought them a first-aid kit. The hunters knew all the tricks of the trade, could fix up a wound, a broken bone or a burn; in the "parm", as the people of the Urals call their forest, there are no doctors and one can't always find an orderly in a brief encounter or on reconnoissance. Nesterov and Yershov had many a time administered first aid to their comrades. And now, when all were preparing for the big job that would soon begin, everyone of the twelve hastened to see that all preparations were made. When they had inspected their weapons, nearly all of them suddenly started to write short letters as they were accustomed to doing before every battle, for a soldier can be sure of his fate only before the first shot is fired.

Meanwhile at battalion headquarters Lieutenant Suslov was making his report. To Suslov's surprise, his report, which he had considered of importance only for his battalion, was attentively listened to by the colonel commanding the regiment and the major-general commanding the division. Somewhat flustered at first at the sight of these men, Suslov was now more calm and, carefully considering the questions of the colonel and major-general, gave his answers clearly and without hesitation. Here too the talk revolved around the height but the difference was that instead of the soldiers' nickname "Pernicious", the height was given the spot height on the map, 196, i.e., its height above sea level. It was clear from the lines on the map

lying before the major-general and from their density that height 196 was pernicious because it lay directly in front of the regiment and from it the Germans could see clearly not only the battalion's front-line but the division's lateral roads, the railway station which had recently been rebuilt and then destroyed again by German long-range artillery and the steppe which made it difficult to hide the reserves (whose existence it would have been very desirable to keep from the Germans) arriving to supplement the division and for use in future operations. Thus the name the soldiers had given the height was perfectly justified and although their officers did not employ it in the communiqués it was heard frequently enough in their conversations and always pronounced it with bitterness and anger. And now, outlining his plan, Suslov saw this height clearly before him although headquarters were at the bottom of a huge silo tower put out of commission long ago, but whose basement remained undamaged, disguised now by a thick roofing and hidden from the eyes of the Germans by the ruins of stone walls.

In the Soviet Information Bureau's official communiqués for a long time now only one phrase had been reported about this sector of the front—"no changes"—while down in the south Soviet troops were already fighting on foreign soil, had beaten the enemy back across the Pruth and were taking Rumanian cities and villages. Many soldiers and officers yearned to be in the fighting but instead were forced to continue this positional warfare aimed at outwitting the enemy. When the communiqué said that no changes had taken place that day, in actual fact complex manoeuvres and counter-manoevres had been engaged in and a battle, invisible to the eye of the uninitiated, continued all the time, changing the line of the front sometimes by one or two kilometres and sometimes even by as little as ten—fifteen metres. There were cases when it was precisely these metres, omitted entirely by the communiqués, that served as the springboard from which at a fixed date, the troops would rush into the offensive and beat back, pursue, encircle and destroy the enemy on this sector of the front.

It suddenly became clear to Suslov,

outlining his plan, that what had appeared at first sight an operation of little significance had in reality developed in the plans of the division's command into a complex strategic problem which he and his men were destined to solve. And when he reported how many men he had intended to take along, he thought the major-general would ridicule his intentions and tell him to take the whole company, then send the entire battalion to the same place and that when the battle was launched he would throw the division into it. . . . But to Suslov's amazement, the major-general, the colonel and the battalion commander agreed with his plan and with the number of people he had decided on for its execution.

"You can go now," said the major-general and suddenly stretching out his hand to Suslov, shook the other's long tanned fingers and when Suslov was already at the door, or rather in the narrow corridor leading into the tower, added: "If possible get into contact with headquarters. I will take personal charge of the operation."

From the tone of voice in which this statement was made Suslov understood just how important was this plan he had conceived and undertaken. All the way back to his company he thought of his general, a man whom he loved, respected and of whom he stood a little in awe. The operation, he thought, simply must be a success, otherwise he would never dare look into his general's eyes with the same frankness that had been in his eyes today, and never again would he be shown such solicitude and attention as the general had displayed. At the same time his mind was busy ferreting out any loopholes in his plans which the Germans might use to their advantage. But this last analysis of the task he had undertaken was reassuring.

At 3.20 a.m. Suslov was back at his dugout where the company officers and sergeants awaited him.

He gave his final orders to his second-in-command and appointed a company commander in case of his disablement. Then Suslov went to the twelve men whom fate had destined to be with him in so serious a task; he wanted to say a few words to them, most important of all, of course, that the general himself was keeping an eye on the operation. 19

From his own experience Suslov knew how important for the soldier was the interest his superiors displayed in his routine work and what an uplift their direct participation gave to his morale. And at 3.30 the thirteen-men assault group led by Suslov and accompanied by two groups detailed to divert the enemy left the dugout.

"Pernicious" height might have been called the eyes of the Germans. It was situated three hundred metres behind the German front-line and eight hundred metres from the company's position. Behind the German dugouts stretched a deep gully which extended all the way to the foot of the height. The dugouts were protected by barbed wire (in some places by three rows and in others by five), electrically-charged wire, warning signals, traps and mine-fields. The dugouts were connected by narrow communication trenches in which German sentries were on duty during the night. In addition to all this the dugouts were fronted by German camouflaged traps, snipers' nests and fire points.

The task that confronted the men was to penetrate this network without being noticed, cross the German front-line and take the height by storm; then hold out until reinforcements could reach them and other groups beat the Germans out of the dugouts and join the men holding the height. Every man in Suslov's group knew this as well as Suslov himself; nevertheless, he could detect not the slightest expression of fear on their faces. True, they had lost their everyday calm and all of them were tense and excited but it was the excitement of battle, the premonition of danger and the desire to avoid it as far as it was possible to do so without detriment to the job in hand.

In a confident manner Suslov issued the final assignments and calmly took the first step forward. He was immediately lost in the fog which lay in dense clouds over the whole valley, revealing only the tall mounds where Suslov's company awaited in nervous tension the events to come.

The Germans may have been very clever in organizing their defences, but Suslov's cunning matched theirs and in the course of the two weeks in which his attack had been prepared he had learned the whereabouts of all German traps, when they changed guard, where their

old soldiers and where their inexperienced recruits were to be found. For two weeks both Suslov and everyone of his men had made nightly expeditions under the barbed wire, cutting it and immediately tying the torn edges to prevent the Germans noticing anything, disconnecting the signal wires from the bells to which they were attached, de-mining the passages, leaving in place of the mines wooden boxes in case the Germans inspected their mine-fields. At times these men crept far into the depths of the German defences looking for future ways of attack, although none of them knew what awaited them. . . .

And so, as they started out now, thanks to the reconnoissance of the preceding days, each one of them had a map in his hand, clearly marking the path he was to follow. They could now make their way quite calmly, remembering of course that the slightest awkward move, noise or extra movement might be fatal not only to the perpetrator but to the whole unit. Still, there was more reason for their assurance than for the assurance of the Germans, who considered themselves quite safe behind all their traps. The thirteen now made their way past the sleeping Germans and past those who should not have been asleep, under the illusory cover of the early morning, the dusk and the light fog which they knew would disappear as soon as the sun rose. But even the time of day chosen for the venture, the hours just before sunrise, known to them to be so uncertain and dangerous, were chosen precisely because the Germans knew that the Russians would never risk attacking such strongly defended positions in daylight. That's why Suslov chose to move before day had set in but when the hours of darkness were already gone.

The men made their way along the secret path in single file. The ones in front at times had to wait for the others to catch up. Only the signalmen lagged behind seeming to melt into the snowy softness of the fog. Occasionally Suslov glanced at his wrist watch which told him first that it was 4.10, then that the sun had risen. . . . And they were still a long way from their goal. At 4.25 the whole group pulled up at the mouth of the ravine at the very foot of the height. Before them was dense brushwood and a steep slope torn by the spring

foods. Suslov ordered them to quicken their pace but to maintain absolute quiet.

Nesterov and Yershov were the only ones who had previously been in this sector of the German camp. The old trackers could walk and crawl almost noiselessly thanks to their hunting habits. And so now, crawling along on all fours, and selecting the strongest branches and roots by their outward appearance and by their sense of touch, they were the first to reach the platform where the height's garrison was situated. They lay there, holding their breath, waiting for the rest to reach them. They were especially anxious about the mortar-gunners whose movements were hampered by the mortars they carried. Everybody carried mortar-bombs. They had them in their knapsacks and Nesterov and Yershov had even stuffed them into their pockets. Valiullin and his assistants clambered up one after the other, there was the sudden falling of sand and the scraping of iron against stone.

Unexpectedly Suslov appeared at the side of the old soldiers and Nesterov saw him glance nervously at his watch, then at the sky, lift himself up slightly, making ready for the thrust forward and at that very moment the whole sky became red hot, the earth cracked, it became difficult to breathe and there was lightning shell bursts and fountains of black earth and smoke a few yards behind the assault group. It was the division's artillery hitting at the Germans' main line in support of the shock unit which was already out of range of their fire. Suslov sprang to his feet. Against the background of clear sky he was visible to everyone of the men and as he waved his hand to hurl grenades the rest, following his example, hurled their grenades and threw themselves into the dugouts right after the exploding grenades.

The attack was so unexpected and made with such lightning speed that the Germans found themselves under concentrated tommy-gun and machine-gun fire before they could blink an eyelid. Valiullin managed to get himself into a corner of a communication trench where he could hit at those remaining in the dugouts and at those fleeing from them. Nesterov with his usual dexterity moved ahead, almost to the very edge of the opposite side of the height. He was

followed by Yershov. They caught sight of the reserve dugouts where it had only just been realized that the height was captured. The three Ivans were clearing up the captured dugouts, throwing grenades into the narrow burrows and into the bunkers and shooting at the communication trenches where the Germans were still trying to put up a fight. At the same time a terrific cannonade, intermingled with tommy-gun fire, could be heard from the front-lines where the diversion units had also gone into attack. And when mortar-gunners Minayev and Pastukhov took their places next to Nesterov pouring lead into the dugouts below it was reported to Suslov that the height was cleared of Germans.

Valiullin and the mortar-gunners kept up a steady fire against the dugouts of the Germans' second line while the rest hastily prepared the German trenches on the height for defence. Suslov knew that in a few minutes the Germans would recover from their surprise, realize that they were facing only a tiny group of men and launch a series of attacks. He knew, too, their fierce strength and at times completely senseless obstinacy, the mechanical obtuseness with which they frequently undertook attacks before realizing their futility. In this case, however, the Germans could have no doubt about their chances of regaining the height for they had realized that their first impression of opposition by a strong force was wrong, since a drawn-out battle still raged on the front-lines. So the lieutenant urged the men to dig themselves in as far as possible and make ready for a long battle. It goes without saying that the men themselves understood that only the speed with which they dug in could save them and so they fell to with a will, their shovels ringing against the hard earth.

At this moment two men appeared on the height and Suslov was cheered to recognize in them his signalmen whom he had considered dead ever since they had been separated from the rest. They came along jauntily, Ushakov leading the way and a few yards behind him Yegorov unrolling cable from a drum as he went. Ushakov dashed into the trench, put down the telephone which he had been carrying and reported with a spiritedness that was, after all, understandable:

"Permit me to report, Comrade Senior Lieutenant, communications with headquarters have been established. Three Germans were killed during this operation. Otherwise, everything in order."

"Ushakov! How did you ever do it?" exclaimed Suslov and suddenly embraced the signalman, pressing him to his chest and kissing him.

Yegorov who was already at the telephone, looked with envy at his pal. Suddenly he sprang up:

"Comrade Senior Lieutenant, the major-general is asking for you!"

Everybody in the trench heard this exclamation and all gathered round Suslov to listen to his conversation. He made no sign to them to leave for he understood that they were just as much in need of a word of comfort as he himself.

"I am listening, Comrade Major-General."

"Where are you speaking from?"

"From height 196. The height was taken at 5 a. m. There are no killed or wounded. Signalmen Ushakov and Yegorov have established communications."

"Thank you, Lieutenant. Inform your people that they have all been awarded the Order of Glory. I will decorate them myself as soon as we meet. The Germans may cut our communication line. If so I order you to hold on until 22.00 o'clock. In case of extreme difficulties your signal is three green rockets, our signal to retreat is three white rockets. But bear in mind, that it is a signal I have no intention of giving."

"Yes," said the lieutenant, then he put his hand over the microphone and said shortly: "Collect all the arms the Germans have left behind, especially the mortar-shells and cartridges." Then he turned to the telephone: "I am listening, Comrade Major-General."

Something snapped in the receiver. Suslov blew into it but the contact had been broken.

Ushakov jumped up immediately:

"May I inspect the line?"

"No, not now," said Suslov. He turned to his men who were all waiting for something, straightened himself and exclaimed:

"I congratulate you, chevaliers of the Order of Glory!"

Valiullin who had torn himself for a minute from his machine-gun to say

something to the lieutenant suddenly burst out, hitting himself on the chest.

"Me too? Me too?"

"You too, Valiullin and Sharipov and Ulumbayev and everyone of you!"

Valiullin suddenly sat down on his heels like a Moslem at prayer, passed his hands over his face, shouted something in Tatar, then rose to his feet and said in an entirely different tone of voice:

"The Hun comes, Comrade Commander, big Hun, many Hun," turned on his heel and dashed to his machine-gun.

A minute later everybody in the trench heard his shout of joy as he told his comrades about the decoration, then the intermittent rattle of his machine-gun, for Valiullin never used long bursts, he fired like a sniper. Then they heard mines exploding, Germans shouting and the moaning of wounded. Ushakov still stood next to Suslov repeating uncertainly:

"What about the communications? We had done such a splendid job. . ."

"Forget the communications," repeated Suslov, "get some grenades and a tommy-gun."

Suslov never remembered just what happened in the next three hours. He gave orders and these orders were carried out despite the fact that at times it seemed there was no one to execute them.

The men kept up the fight, they beat off attacks with German grenades on long wooden handles, fired with German tommy-guns and flung German mortar-bombs with their bare hands right into the attacking hordes for they had damaged their own mortars during their attack and those of the Germans had been destroyed even earlier. The only thing that kept them alive was their soldiers' luck and the fact that the Germans couldn't use machine-guns and mortars against them for they were too close to the German dugouts. And once more Suslov had to admit the merits of a plan which permitted him to hold the height, although three of his men were already wounded. Nesterov had put aside his arms and was attending to the wounded, as a result of which Ivan Kazakov was able to crawl to the edge and continue firing. Ushakov and Minayev, the mortarmen, were unconscious.

At 8 a.m. Suslov saw, in the valley behind the German dugouts, clouds of dust, still invisible to the Germans who,

in losing the height, had lost their "eyes". Suslov realized that tanks were launching an attack, not in his direction but towards the big village where, through the early morning air, he could see the golden church domes shining in the sun. At the same time, at the foot of the height, in the heroes' rear, attacks were continued from the front but they had lost their intensity, as if Suslov's company had lost all hope of saving its commander and joining him. The Germans, too, had decreased their pressure on the height, as if they were resting before a new attack.

For two hours the ten men rested and the wounded lay in the shade enjoying the lull. Ushakov and Minayev were in urgent need of attention and perhaps even of an operation but nothing could be done to help them. When they regained consciousness they lay silently on the scorched earth, afraid even to moan for fear of disturbing their comrades. The others inspected once again the captured dugouts, collecting what munitions were left, for during the first hours of incessant attack they had used up more than they could afford. Suslov was heartened by the fact that the Germans had left sufficient cartridges and bombs behind to kill another hundred and perhaps even two hundred of them.

At 10 o'clock a German attack plane swooped down upon the height. It was met by such a volley of fire that it was forced to drop part of its load on the German dugouts. After that the attack plane made its appearance no more, but during the attack Yegorov, the hunter and gunner, was killed by a bomb splinter. To avenge him Nesterov subjected to incessant fire those trenches through which they had crawled in the morning. The rest of the men joined in, and the Germans, awakened out of their stupor, once again went into attack, but this time, taking advantage of the fact that the offensive from the front had died down, they attacked the height from two sides. And although there were minutes when the battle was continued in the trenches on the height itself, Suslov was able to beat off the attack. By this time there were only five able-bodied in the detachment. So far death had passed by the rest although they were disabled. All three Ivans had been wounded and even now they lay side by side. They had placed grenades between them

which they meant to explode if the worst came to the worst. Nesterov had once again returned to his duties as medical orderly. He had taken away the men's water bottles because water was something to be treasured as the sun burned high in the heavens and the river, irritating in its proximity and inaccessibility, was in German hands. It was a miracle that Suslov himself was still unhurt, although he had twice been buried under earth and debris during the German attacks.

About 4.00 p.m. he heard an unexpected cannonade coming from the village. The roar of the guns began to die away as if the battle and the direction of the main attack had shifted south, farther than the naked eye could see.

Suddenly excitement began in the German dugouts, the unaided eye could see running groups of infantrymen, changing their positions. Suslov gave orders to open fire at these running Germans. For the first time that day Valiullin set his machine-gun going at such a pace that it seemed to Suslov he would run out of ammunition. Valiullin was taking the tremendous risk of being left without ammunition in case of a new attack but his machine-gun fire upset the German attempt to regroup their companies. Now the Germans led their soldiers farther from the height and at the same time a new attack had started at the front, apparently an attack with large forces because the battle was already raging in the trenches. But this attack, too, petered out.

Suslov glanced at the sun, which was slowly descending towards the horizon. It was six o'clock in the evening. He called Nesterov, pointed to three rockets lying at the bottom of the trench and said:

"If I am killed and you can't hold out any longer, signal."

"When?" said Nesterov imperturbably.

"Whoever is the last one alive will do it," answered Suslov.

Their conversation was cut short by the Germans who chose that moment to launch their eleventh attack. While Valiullin, who had as yet escaped being wounded, set his machine-gun going, Nesterov got out some cases of explosives, probably prepared by the Germans for charging mines. He opened one of the cases, put in a short fuse, set

fire to it, stood up and hurled the case right under the feet of the advancing Germans. At that very minute he fell, hit by a tommy-gun bullet. But the case exploded in the midst of the advancing men, stupefying the Germans. Suslov threw the second case. He bent over Nesterov. The old soldier was alive, but he couldn't speak for the bullet had broken both his jaws.

When Suslov straightened himself he saw that the Germans were again retreating. Valiullin lay quietly at his machine-gun, his assistant moved him aside and took his place. Suslov went up to Valiullin. His shirt was torn into shreds by grenade splinters, he breathed with difficulty but his wounds were minor ones.

"We'll give it to them yet, Valiullin," Suslov comforted him, but the fighter could not hear him, shell-shocked and deafened by the blast.

"That's all right, he'll live to be 'babai'" (the Tartar for old), said machine-gunner number 2, stretching out his wounded hand to Suslov to have it bandaged. Suslov himself dragged the wounded men into the corner which the men laughingly called their first-aid station. And sitting himself next to them, fatigued from the battle and the danger, he recalled with bitterness that he had nobody left with whom to keep up the defence. Nevertheless he got up immediately and returned to the machine-gun, now their only weapon except, of course, the tommy-guns, which wouldn't be of much use to them against such numbers.

For some time Suslov could not see what was happening in the rear and in the direction the tanks had taken. He was so exhausted that he lost all sense of time and place. For some reason, he recalled a quiet summer's day on the Kolva river, he clearly saw before him the dark blue Poliud mountain, whose craggy boulders stood like a fortress against the sky. The coolness of the northern river and its unruffled surface went to his head, it seemed to him that he found it easier to breathe when he thought of that river and the calm that enveloped it. But he soon recalled his true surroundings, saw again the red glow and the dense clouds of smoke which had been raised in the sultry air by the battle and now hung over the height.

24 Just as his eyes began to rove around

in the hope of finding some solace, one of the Tartar machine-gunners shouted to him:

"Comrade Lieutenant, the Huns come!"

In this exclamation there was so much faith that the commander would be able to defend them and beat back the enemy that Suslov could not help smiling. He gave orders just as though he had a whole company under his command instead of only two machine-gunners, one of whom was wounded. For a moment the thought flashed through his mind that perhaps it would be better to be dead or to lie there like the three Ivans with grenades at their sides to be used if necessary, than to feel such helplessness and responsibility. And 10 o'clock was still so far away!

He ordered the machine-gunners to man their gun and himself ran from place to place with a tommy-gun trying to create the impression by short volleys that the height was being defended by several people. But despite all he could do, in five or six minutes the Germans had seen through his ruse, or perhaps they had been ordered to capture the height at any cost. At any rate they broke into the trench, the machine-gunners crept to the centre of the platform where the wounded men lay. Suslov found himself there as well. When the Germans were very close and it was no longer possible for them even to hurl grenades for fear of killing their own men, Suslov suddenly shouted to his wounded men with desperation in his voice:

"Boys, if you could only help me now!"

Suddenly the men whom the Germans had considered corpses, pale, with distorted features, and faces as black as the earth, tortured by fever and thirst, rose to their feet to a man with their grenades and tommy-guns. They were very weak and the grenades they threw burst at the very edge of the trench but so terrible were these men, the three Ivans, Nesterov, with his burnt and blood-stained whiskers, and Valiullin who fell down again immediately he had hurled his grenade, that the Germans suddenly recoiled at the force of the explosions. At this moment the machine-gun went into action again, hurling from the height those Germans who were attempting to renew the attack. They fled down the slope and Suslov shouted something in a hoarse voice. The two men caught

up his shout and dashed ahead but the last Germans were already hastily deserting the height.

And then, as if in support of this hoarse shout, on the height far in the rear of the Germans came a grim "hurrah", the roar of cannons and guns, the ceaseless hum of motors—the mighty roar of battle was heard. And Suslov, towering over the dugout, saw a stream of tanks swiftly descending on them. Everything living ran and fell under their powerful caterpillars, their shells crumbled the heavy roofing over the bunkers to dust. The tankmen jumped from their machines and surrounded the height, beating the Germans out of every nook and cranny. At Suslov's side stood his two men, eagerly taking in the lightning attack of the tanks. Then, simultaneously, as if in answer to a command, they turned to the lieutenant. He stretched out his hands to them and in turn planted a kiss on their parched lips.

One of the men dashed to the wounded who once again lay on the burning earth where they had fallen after the incredible effort which had given them the strength to join battle again. Now most of them were unconscious, but the soldier's voice was so full of passion as he told them of the joyous event that Nesterov got up and took a step forward, handing the lieutenant three green rockets.

Suslov with difficulty made out through the blood which filled Nesterov broken mouth the words:

"I kept these. . . We didn't need them. . ."

Then Nesterov tottered, the lieutenant supported him and carefully put him down next to the others. He looked round him, heard the roar of a tank coming up the side of the height. The major-general, his aide de camp and a tankman sprang through the open hatch. The general made for Suslov almost at a run, Suslov took three steps, straightened himself and suddenly felt an aching in his whole body.

"You're alive, alive!" shouted the major-general, embracing the young officer and looking into his eyes. Then he turned to the aide de camp shouting: "What are you gaping at? Give them a drink of vodka, I say! A doctor! Sit down, Suslov, sit down! Congratulations, Captain Suslov!"

From out of nowhere there appeared

medical orderlies, and a doctor, a girl gave the wounded men hot coffee from a thermos, cared for their wounds and then carried them past the major-general who warmly kissed each one of them and carefully put into their hands a small box with an order which they scrutinized with shining eyes, saying something softly under their breath. But Suslov did not hear what they were saying, there was a roaring in his ears, his head swam and he mechanically watched one of the tankmen cutting a hole in his shirt with his long penknife and putting the pin of the order through the hole. Suslov remained seated, powerless to get up and caressed the shiny surface of the Order of Glory with loving hands. Somebody shouted: "Captain Suslov, Captain Suslov!" For a while he didn't realize that it was his name being called.

The doctor laughed as he kneeled near Nesterov and said something to the major-general. The general asked the doctor to repeat and the latter said:

"This hero wants me to preserve his mustache. Can't make him agree to let me shave them off, and I must."

The major-general went up to Nesterov.

"Yes, those sure are a guardsman's mustaches. I'm afraid, doctor, you'll have to see they're not touched."

And all the men, both wounded and healthy, tired as they were, smiled at the general's cheery words.

Suslov glanced at his watch. It was 9 o'clock. Noticing his movement, the major-general said:

"Everything was done in good time, captain. You distracted the Germans' attention in good time and our division went into the offensive in good time."

Artillery observers were making their way up the height. Signalmen lugged the cable behind them. Suslov went a little away from the rest, threw himself on the dusty warm earth and lapsed immediately into a heavy slumber.

That was a very quiet day at the front. There were only a few words that day in the communiqué:

"On some sectors of the front our troops slightly improved their positions."

The division's newspaper carried a small item about the thirteen chevaliers of the Order of Glory and the taking of the height called "Pernicious" by

the soldiers and marked 196 on the map.

The division took up new positions which at a certain time would become

a springboard for a large-scale offensive.

"No changes," an ordinary quiet day at the front!

Translated by Jennie Karassik

VICTOR FINK

INVASION DAY

Two elderly men sat at a table in a room on the ground floor of the Préfecture Maritime in Havre. One of them, corpulent and pop-eyed, was about sixty. The other, tall, scraggy and dark-featured, with greying hair, was some twelve years younger. A stranger noticing the related posture of these two men, their calm gestures, would scarcely have believed that here sat two mortal enemies, that Captain Stolz of the Gestapo was interrogating the long-hunted and elusive French patriot, Georges Lenoir. But for the handcuffs on Lenoir's wrists one would be hard put to say who was the host in this house, and who, perforce, the guest.

This seemingly strange picture had its simple explanation. These two were acquaintances of long standing. When Stolz learned that the mysterious "Hand of Vengeance" was none other than his old and trusted employee, the maître d'hôtel of his own restaurant, a man whom he had known for practically thirty years, he almost had a fit.

Stolz had been awakened by a telephone call from the Préfecture.

"Come round immediately! We've caught 'The Hand'. We have him right on the spot."

Stolz dashed to the Préfecture posthaste. When two Gestapo men led in Lenoir, Stolz still failed to grasp the situation.

"What is it, Georges?" he asked testily. "What are you doing here at this early hour?"

Then he noticed the handcuffs, and one of the escorting soldiers said:

"Permit to report, Herr Hauptmann, he is 'The Hand'. There can be no doubts."

Stolz turned his roving, disbelieving gaze on the arrested man. He was awaiting Lenoir's protests of innocence, but the latter, noticing the dumbfounded expression on Stolz's face, burst out into such laughter, as to make Herr

Hauptmann Stolz feel very bad indeed. This laughter was more eloquent than any confession and the arrested man capped it with the following words:

"Just think of it! And here you were, for four years shedding confiding tears on my breast because you were unable to find my trail!"

And again he roared with laughter.

Hauptmann Stolz threw an ireful look at the two escorts and ordered them to clear out. Witnesses to this scene upset him. Light was beginning to dawn on him. Then, when everything became clear, he began to rave.

But all this to no purpose. The prisoner calmly advised him to cut the cackle and shut his trap. He warned him to spare his vocal chords—he might strain them shouting like that, and then how would he sing at his wife's next birthday?

The most maddening feature of all this chatter was the imperturbable serenity, the soothing tone of pretended solicitude in which it was spoken. Stolz ceased shouting, but this did not denote reconciliation with the situation. He seethed and bubbled with fury, realizing that now he would be a common laughing stock. Incredible! To think of it! He, Hauptmann Stolz, the terror of the town and surrounding coast had spent four years tirelessly hunting a man whom he met practically every day and with whom he played poker at least twice a week! . . . Stolz angrily anticipating those who would surely laugh behind his back, again fell into a towering passion. Twice he made for Lenoir, beating him with his fists. But the handcuffed man still preserved his utter composure:

"Listen! You can't get away from the fact that you've landed yourself in a nice pickle. I quite appreciate your outburst. Anyone in such a position would fly off the handle. But losing your wits

and temper won't help you! You know me very well, and I suggest you stop your fisticuff methods, otherwise I'll give you such a kick that will send you into hospital. Understand?"

Stolz mumbled something inarticulate and seating himself at the table, reached for a sheet of writing paper on which to note down his official interrogation.

"Name! Surname! Date of birth!" he barked in his habitual official, clipped tone. It now appeared he no longer knew Lenoir, that he was seeing him for the first time in his life, and that never had there been anything in common between them.

"Now stop acting the fool, my dear Stolz," Lenoir said. "You've known my name for thirty years and I haven't changed it like you. . ."

And with this an atmosphere was set up rather unusual in such a building and which lent the questioning of Lenoir the strange features of an informal chat or an argument on some abstract subject. Incidentally, Lenoir warned his interlocutor that this was the only form of interrogation acceptable to him.

"And as far as you're concerned, there's no point in your simply sending me to Kingdom Come without any formalities or procedure. You'll find it far more interesting to chat with me, perhaps worm out everything possible. You'd be far better employed writing down my interrogation with a pen on paper than using a club on my back."

"Well, so what?" Stolz forced himself to articulate.

"So what? So you must be civil, calm and circumspect in talking with me."

And, after a short pause, Lenoir resumed:

"So you want to know how long I've been working underground, what my job was, and who helped me? I'm willing to answer all these questions."

"That's right, that's right!" Stolz exclaimed in pleased tones. "I can see you're the same clever Lenoir as ever. You appreciate, of course, that in your position the best thing for you is to make a clean breast of everything and tell us the true and full story of all your crimes. Well, I'm listening!"

Stolz settled back in his armchair.

"You ask me how long I've been a member of the resistance organization?

A long time. A very long time. In fact since the first day. And even before. That you were a spy I knew long before the war."

"Enough of that! Don't forget yourself, Lenoir. A spy! I was simply a German and living in France, I served the Vaterland."

"Exactly what I mean," Lenoir concurred. "You were a spy before World War I, as I knew long ago. In latter years 'The Golden Deer' served as the lair for your gang of spies."

"A bit more careful with your expressions!"

"Oh yes, to be sure. . . Shall we say, then, 'your estimable circle of choral singing enthusiasts'. That's why I served as your maitre d'hôtel. I was particularly interested in your circle of friends. Unfortunately our police turned a blind eye to your dark doings. But French patriots kept a watchful eye on you."

"Ach, so! That is interesting! Very interesting indeed!" remarked Stolz.

"We began our resistance the very first day the Germans arrived, let's say from May 1940. But it wasn't much of resistance at that time! Mere child's play at first! Whenever a German officer came to our restaurant, every dish he was served was first spat in."

As Stolz angrily banged his fist on the table Lenoir stopped him with a curt gesture.

Stolz reached for his pen.

"Oh yes, and add the following: ever since you dropped your Dutch alias of van der Meer and resumed your real name and began working openly in the Gestapo, you too were never served with a single dish until at least two people at first spat in it!"

"Who were they? Their names?!"

"Why beat about the bush? Put down mine first," was Lenoir's imperturbable reply. "As regards all the other boys, none of them are working for you any more. One of them you had shot. . . Albert. . ."

"He was a Communist! . . ."

"No, he wasn't! Guess again. . . Among all your employees the only Communist was Jean Legros."

"Legros? Jean? Impossible, you're joking!"

"Exactly! Legros and none other. You laid hands on Albert, but Jean got away."

"Where to? Where is he? Come on, speak up!"

"With pleasure! He's in Savoy, away in the hills. I'm sorry I can't give you his exact address, but I'm sure you stand a good chance of meeting him if you'll visit the hills. But I couldn't guarantee how your encounter would end."

Stolz began resenting Lenoir's tone of voice.

"Listen here, Lenoir!" he exclaimed furiously. "Stop talking nonsense! You're trying to make a fool of me. Clear out! We'll continue our conversation another time."

Stolz resolved to get rid of Lenoir eventually by the usual Gestapo method—a pistol-shot in the nape of the neck. But since he first badly wanted the names of all Georges Lenoir's active accomplices, he preferred keeping him alive for the time being.

The interrogation was resumed the following morning. But the next day, and the day after, and for several days and nights in succession Lenoir continued spinning the same yarn of deeds perpetrated long ago and whose participants, moreover, had long hidden from the enemy's sight. These were tales of attempts on the lives of German officers, of explosions, railway accidents and collisions, of fires and killings still undiscovered, but which now were not worth following up, since the perpetrators had to be hunted for somewhere in the Savoy hills or "somewhere in France, but where, I couldn't really tell you myself".

Stolz sat brooding.

"Yes," he wrathfully mumbled at last, "you lost no time, confound you! You lost no time!"

"Ah, you can't disguise the truth," Lenoir smilingly agreed. "We certainly lost no time."

And after a brief pause, he added:

"Now while we're on the subject, let's talk of what time lost or gained implies, especially in war-time. Remember 1914? In those days the Germans dreamed of these foggy shores as of a promised land. Troop trains carrying German cannon fodder would sometimes halt in the dead of night at some God-forsaken siding somewhere in Argonne or on the Somme and the soldiers, tumbling out of their cars to ease their needs, would read the name of the station: 'Calais'. . . Remember? So that

the dumb fools would think they'd be in London by the following day. But they never saw London, nor even the English coast. They lost time, all for nothing. In this war you managed to get as far as Havre. But what did you gain by it? Your soldiers were trained for landing operations under fire. The waves tossed stormily, your N.C.O.'s barked and your sergeants bawled out orders and the dumb fools practiced jumps into the sea carrying machine-guns on their backs. Lots of them sank like lead—they couldn't swim. And no one rescued them. Once you can't swim, you're a goner. There's no time for swimming lessons. You reckoned on being in England in a couple of days."

"They died for the Führer and Great Germany," Stolz solemnly declared. "They are happy."

"That's true. They are. Better to have died hopefully in 1940, even though foolishly, than to live in 1944, without any hopes at all."

"Stop that, Lenoir!" interpolated Stolz. "You're going too far! I'm tired of all your chatter about Calais, beachhead landings and your other stories. You're simply wasting my time. . ."

Lenoir grinned.

"My impression right now," Stolz continued, "is that you're simply stretching matters out, deliberately. . . But what I don't understand is on what you're banking. We're only wasting time, both of us."

"I can assure you that you're the only one losing time," was Lenoir's retort. "I'm gaining it. The whole of yesterday I thought things out and weighed up all eventualities. Let's assume you get fed up and shoot me. . ."

"A very probable eventuality," Stolz remarked.

"Quite. I shall cease to exist. But will you long outlive me? The Allied landing can be expected any day now, any hour. Which means that you, my esteemed host, will have to instantly open a restaurant in Kingdom Come. I hope I make myself quite clear. . . Meaning to say that whatever way you look at it, your number is up, you're done for—Kaput!—whether you kill me or not. And the most important thing for me right here and now is to outlive you."

"Oh no, you won't!" Stolz bawled

out. And swiftly drawing his gun he pointed it at Lenoir.

Just then the silence of the slumbering city was rudely shattered by the fiery breath of shell bursts, the ear-splitting roar of exploding bombs and the swelling hum of thousands of aircraft engines.

"It's started! It's started! Invasion Day!!!" Lenoir shrieked, his voice cracking with excitement.

The sound of the shot fired by Stolz was drowned in the din and thunder of this momentous dawn, but Stolz missed his target. The killer's scared hand trembled and he nervelessly dropped

his gun. The arrested man kicked him in the pit of the stomach and seizing the revolver in his manacled hands, fired a single shot, a shot that was well aimed.

"I won time!" he muttered, as he sped out of the room.

The corridor was deserted. The alarmed sentries had evidently scuttled down to the bomb-shelter.

"It's started! It's started!" Lenoir joyfully shouted at the top of his voice, as he found himself running through the streets unmolested. "The Great Day! Invasion Day!"

Translated by Moss Muscatt

VICTOR VAZHDAYEV

TWO OLD FABLES ON A NEW FOOTING

The Turnip

Once upon a time people planted a turnip. The turnip grew and grew until it became a big, big turnip. There was never another the like of it anywhere. That's the kind of turnip it was!

One day Hitler came running from Berlin. He took a great hold of the Soviet turnip. He pulled and he *pulled* and he **PULLED**—but he couldn't pull it up!

"What sort of a turnip can this be?" he thought. He'd pulled the turnips up all right in Prague, in Vienna, in Paris, in the Hague, in Oslo, in Warsaw, in Budapest, while in Rome, Helsinki, Sofia and Bucharest they'd even jumped right into his hand all of themselves, and here he couldn't pull it up at all, no matter how hard he tried!

So Hitler let out a shout, and his fascists came running up to help him—Göring, Goebbels, Himmler...

They all took hold—Himmler held Goebbels, Goebbels held Göring, Göring

held Hitler and Hitler held the turnip. They pulled and they *pulled* and they **PULLED** and they all shouted "Heil!"—but they couldn't pull it up!

They wanted to call for Hess, but he'd made off to England. They wanted to call Haushofer, but Himmler'd got him behind bars. They wanted to call Röhm, but then they remembered that they'd shot him themselves.

So they had to call for Mussolini. And then they all took hold again—Mussolini held Himmler, Himmler held Goebbels, Goebbels held Göring, Göring held Hitler and Hitler held the turnip. They pulled and they *pulled* and they **PULLED**—but they couldn't pull it up.

Pétain came running along from Paris. But what good was that old man anyhow? He could pull and pull and he'd only set his old joints creaking. Like rattling a skeleton, that's all it amounted to.

What was to be done now? They decided to call the cur. They called one,



but three came running all at once—the Hungarian, the Finnish and the Rumanian.

And they all took hold: Mannerheim held Horthy, Horthy held Antonescu, Antonescu held Pétain, Pétain held Mussolini, Mussolini held Himmler, Himmler held Goebbels, Goebbels held Göring, Göring held Hitler, and Hitler held the turnip. And they pulled and they *pulled* and they PULLED—and suddenly the turnip came up.

"Heil Hitler!" shouted Hitler.

But then the turnip had shot right out of the earth all by itself and it wore a Red Army helmet. And just think there was a soldier standing there with shoulders a yard wide! And then there came another and ranged up beside him, and another on the other side, and behind them more kept coming, ranks and ranks of them! Well, the fascists just got mad. They'd been trying to pull up the turnip, and now—Lord save and preserve us!—here was a whole field of them, the whole of the Soviet people, bristling with bayonets and scowling with guns, come out to fight to the death.

The earth shook, the sky trembled and cracked with the people's strength. The Soviet people came to help the Red Army. All who would and could, went to fight the enemy, and all who would but couldn't because they didn't know how, went and learned, and old and young learned to handle weapons, and their war cry rang out:

"Shoot them with rifles, stab them with bayonets, rend them with grenades, crush them with mortars!"

And however they fought and whatever they fought with, it was grand for the Russians, but it was death for the Germans.

Moral: some turnips are better to be left alone!

The Wolf and the Seven Goats

Once upon a time there was a wolf. Now in those days wherever you looked—in the forests and in the meadows, north, south, east and west—there were goats, jolly little fellows living with their mothers in their little huts.

The wolf looked around and around, and the more he looked the more he wanted to taste goat meat.

Then he thought to himself: "I'll go off to Moravia, to Bohemia, to the Czech forests, beyond the Erzgebirge."

So the wolf set off, and as he ran his bones rattled, he was so hungry, and his claws rasped the ground and his eyes glittered. He clambered up onto the Erzgebirge and he looked over the edge; then he growled in his rough, hoarse voice:

*Little goats, little goats,
Czech goats, Slovak goats,
Unlock the door, Mama's come,
Brought you lots of good things home:
A jug of milk and curds and whey,
Enough to last you all the day!*

And as he called his mouth was watering and he gnashed his teeth with impatience. But the goats replied:

"We can hear you, but that's not our Mama's voice. Our Mama's got a smooth, tender voice."

And they didn't open the door.

Then the wolf went to the forge.

There stood Goebbels, short and lame and hump-backed, and twisted, and twisty in his ways, but an Aryan all the same!—busy hammering out German happiness.

How glad the wolf was!

"Goebbels, Goebbels! Make me a nice thin, smooth tongue!"

"Come, stick it out!"

The wolf put out his tongue, all long and rough as it was. Goebbels took up his tongs and pulled at the wolf's tongue till it was as long as from here to there and then he smoothed it over with grease, strewed sugar over it and hammered it out—that was a fine, long, smooth tongue! Then he sprayed the wolf with eau de Cologne, because his hide stank three miles off.

The wolf went back and with his long smooth tongue he sang in a high, smooth, tender voice:

*Little goats, little goats,
Unlock the door, Mama's come,
Brought you lots of good things home:
A jug of milk and curds and whey,
Enough to last you all the day!*

The goats listened, and it was their mother's voice, like as two peas. And there was a lovely smell of flowers. . . They opened the door and the wolf burst into the Czech forest and started tearing them all to pieces and eating them.

He ate and he ate, but still it wasn't enough. He wanted more.

"I'll go over to the other side," he thought to himself. "I'll look around and find some more goats with fine juicy meat and sweat marrow bones to crunch!"

So the wolf licked his lips and went on further.

The goats were sitting at home singing songs and playing games, not worrying about anything, listening to what the old goat told them, like good little goats. But there was an old bearded goat with them, and a baggy old goat he was! He was called Pétain and he kept on talking and shaking his horns and stamping his hoofs and boasting of all that he'd do to that wolf if he only came near enough.

"All the other goats have only got huts," he said, "but we've got a wall in front as well, a stone and iron wall. That's called Maginot, and nobody can get over it or under it or push it down. Nobody can get at us."

The wolf came along to the wall, and he sniffed at it and he sniffed at it again. He saw he couldn't push it down or jump over it or dig under it.

"Well, then, I'll go around it," he thought.

The wolf went right round the wall and came to the back door. He knocked at the door and sang:

*Little goats, little goats,
Unlock the door, Mama's come,
Brought you lots of good things home:
A jug of milk and curds and whey,
Enough to last you all the day!*

The goats ran and jumped about in the hut, and they asked each other:

"Why's Mama come to the back door? Maybe it's the wolf pretending to be our Mama and trying to get in?"

But the old bearded goat Pétain stopped his boasting, and his eyes were as big as saucers with fright and the sweat pattered on the floor like rain. He guessed that it really was the wolf come to eat up the little goats.

"If I do the wolf a good turn," he thought to himself, "he'll think kindly of me, he'll spare me and take me into his service and maybe he'll even reward me. . . The little goats will die anyway whatever I do."

And he went to the door.

"Don't open the door!" cried the little goats. "That's not Mama who's come!"

"Why, why, little kiddies, little goats,"

said the old bearded goat Pétain. "Don't you know your own Mama?"

And the wolf sang again:

*A jug of milk and curds and whey,
Enough to last you all the day!*

And the old goat opened the door. The greedy wolf dashed into the hut and began eating up the goats, grabbing everyone he set eyes on, setting up trials, passing sentences, but he spared the boastful old Pétain-goat, he even graciously lifted his tail for the Pétain-goat to kiss, he dressed him in a livery and propped him up at the door—he was old and had a beard, it was a fine doorkeeper he made!

The wolf ate and stuffed himself till he felt full and lazy.

"Why should I bother to go and look for the goats?" he thought. "Let them come to me."

He stretched out his neck and called loudly:

Little goats, little goats!

And he'd hardly called when he heard them bleating a long way off: "Mama! Mama!"

And just imagine, running and jumping as fast as they could came goats from every side—Hungarian and Finnish and Rumanian. They saw the wolf with his long teeth and sharp claws and his rough coat, but they were so frightened that they pretended they didn't see it at all and they went on calling: "Mama! Mama!"

The wolf started eating them and they trembled with fear and went on smiling as the wolf told them to and were ashamed of being thin and bony. The wolf crunched the juicy marrow bones while they went on calling: "Mama! Mama! You've brought us so many good things!"

The wolf ate and stuffed himself and got bolder and more ferocious. What did he care for anybody!

"Why should I bother to sing in a smooth, tender voice?" he thought to himself. "Just let them try not to let me in!"

And the wolf went to the east.

He came to the Russian land, the Soviet land, and didn't put on a smooth voice at all, but started growling in his own hoarse, greedy, ruffianish voice:

"Hey, you, your mother's come!"

"Mother?" asked a voice from inside the house.

"Yes, your mother, your mother," rasped the wolf and threw himself at the door.

But suddenly the door opened itself, and in the doorway there appeared—not goats, but a big strong fellow with a club in his hand.

"That's as may be," he said, and took a good swing and bang! down came his club on the wolf's skull:

"Here's our blessing for you!"

The wolf saw stars. The club came down with such a bang that it could be heard all over the world, and all the little goats that were still alive but prisoners of the wolf woke up and jumped up and danced for joy:

"Now the wolf's met a MAN!"

The wolf sprang at the young fellow's throat, but he stepped aside and the wolf missed his grip. The lad gave an-

other swing to his club and another bang at the wolf's skull:

"That's for mother, and that's for the children, the little goats!"

And what do you think,—more fine young fellows began coming out of the door all ready for battle, young and strong and with good sharp wits. Their clubs were iron and their fists were heavy.

They're fighting the wolf now. And if you lift up your head and prick your ears and listen you can hear it—the roar of it is sounding all over the world.

And now you've read this tale, pull yourselves together and don't lose time—one works for three and three for nine, each one for everybody. With bayonet and gun, hammer and plough, with every word you say and everything you do, in work and in battle—smash the fascist wolf!

Translated by Eve Manning



VLADIMIR KOROLENKO

MY FIRST ACQUAINTANCE WITH DICKENS

My first book, which I began decyphering syllable by syllable, and ended by reading quite fluently, was a novel by the Polish writer Korzeniowski—a talented work, with a good literary style. After this, nobody guided my choice of books, and there was a time when it was unorganized and left to chance.

I was simply following in the footsteps of my elder brother.

He was two and a half years older than I. In childhood, this is a considerable difference, and my brother was very jealous of his rights. With the object of pre-

serving the distance between himself and the "children", he assumed various privileges. First of all, he got himself a walking stick and would march about the streets swinging it jauntily. This privilege was permitted. The grown-ups laughed at him, but did not take the stick away. It was somewhat worse when he procured himself a supply of tobacco and began learning to smoke—secretly as far as our parents were concerned but in front of us, younger ones. Naturally enough, it was not much of a success—it made him feel sick, and he kept the tobacco more out of vain glory

than anything else. When father first discovered the smoking, he was first very angry, and then decided: "Better for the lad to read books." My brother was given two zlotys (22.5 cents) and took out a monthly ticket in a stationer's shop belonging to Pan Butkiewicz on Kiev street, which combined its trade in paper, pictures, music, school-books and exercise-books with a circulating library. The choice was not very large—the books most in demand there at the time were by Dumas, Eugene Sue, Cooper, the secrets of various courts and I think Rocambole, already famous at that time. . .

My brother treated this new right as another privilege. When I tried one day to look at a book he had left on the table, he tore it from my hands, saying:

"Clear out! You're too young to read novels."

After this it was only secretly, in his absence, that I took the books and with one ear cocked, gulped down page after page.

This was strange, colourful, spicy reading. There was no time to read solidly through a book, I had hastily to look at the main points of the plot and then follow it in patches. And now, much of what I read at the time remains in my mind like a countryside seen through wisps of drifting fog. As in a forest glade, brightly lighted patches appear and disappear again: d'Artagnan, leaving his little town on his ridiculous jade, the figures of his musketeer friends, the murder of Queen Margot, several of Sue's wicked Jesuits; all these figures loomed up and vanished again, frightened away by my brother's footsteps, to reappear somewhere else (in the next volume), without any connection with the plot, without any clear characteristics. Duels, ambushes, love intrigues, crimes and their inevitable punishment. Sometimes I had to part with the hero at the most critical moment, with a sword through him and the novel was not ended so that there was time for the most tormenting possibilities. When I timidly enquired whether the hero was alive and what was happening to his beloved while he was having a miserable time with a sword in his chest, my brother replied with stern dignity:

"Don't touch my books! You're still too young to be reading novels," and hid the books somewhere else.

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Some time later, however, he found it a nuisance to go to the library himself, and decided to make use of another privilege of seniority—he began sending me to change his books. . .

This delighted me. The library was a considerable distance from our house, and for the whole of that distance the books were in my possession. I began reading as I walked. . .

This gave the very process of reading a decidedly unusual, one might say risky character. At first I could not adapt myself to the people and traffic in the streets, and was in danger of finding myself beneath a cab or colliding with passers-by. To this day I remember a very solid figure, some Pole with clipped grey whiskers and a broad face, who took me by the collar when I bumped into him, examined me for some moments with amused curiosity and then let me go with some sententious utterance. In time, however, I learned to slip skilfully through all dangers, seeing from over the top of the book the legs of people approaching. . . I would walk slowly, sometimes stopping at corners, eagerly following the story until I arrived at the book-shop. There I would hastily glance at the dénouement and with a sigh, enter Butkiewicz's shop. Naturally, there were many gaps. Knights, bandits, defenders of innocence, beautiful ladies, all waltzed through my head like a witches' sabbath to the rumble of traffic, in disconnected fragments, strange and mysterious, tantalizing and exciting the imagination without satisfying it. All I remember of *Le Chevalier de la Maison Rouge* is the place where, disguised as a Jacobin, he counts the flagstones in a hall with his steps, and in the end finds himself beneath a scaffold on which the loveliest of queens is executed, with a cloth soaked in her blood. What he was trying to do and how he got under the scaffold I did not learn for a long time.

I rather think that this reading did me a good deal of harm. It filled my head with strange and torturous adventures, unconnected with anything in particular. It blurred faces and characters and gave me an altogether superficial view of books. . .

II

One day I brought my brother a book, I think taken from some magazine and

bound, in which my practised eye was unable to find the usual thread of adventure when I hastily glanced through it on my way home. There was some tall man, stern, unpleasant. A merchant. He had an office where he "had often dealt in hides, but never in hearts". Too much for me! What did I want with this uninteresting man! Why was it that Uncle Sol had such a strange conversation with his nephew in the chandler's shop? Ah, here we had it at last—an old woman kidnaps a girl, the merchant's daughter. But the whole affair ended with the old beggar taking off the girl's dress and giving her rags in exchange. She comes home, she is given hot tea and put to bed. A miserable apology for an adventure, which I looked upon with disdain. Is that what some call adventure? I was prejudiced against the book from the start, and neglected the opportunities when my brother left it about.

But one day when my brother was reading it I saw him burst out laughing as though he had gone mad, and afterwards, again and again, he would throw himself back in his chair rocking it on two legs and roaring with laughter. When some of his friends came, I gained possession of the book, to find out what there could be so funny in what happened to that leather merchant.

For some time I wandered here and there through the book, stumbling over a whole galaxy of characters, and their conversation, just as I did walking along the street, but I still failed to find the main thing—the flow of Dickens' humour. The figure of little Paul flashed before me, of his sister Florence. Uncle Sol, Captain Toodle with the iron hook instead of a hand. . . No, there was nothing interesting here. . . Toots with his love of fancy waistcoats. . . Fool! . . What was the use of describing such an idiot?

But glancing through Paul's death (I did not like descriptions of deaths in general), I suddenly ceased my race along the pages and stopped as though bewitched:

"Your Pa's a-going off, Miss Floy, tomorrow morning. . ."

"Do you know," asked Florence without looking at her, "where Papa is going, Susan?"

The reader probably remembers what follows. Florence is mourning her brother. Mr. Dombey is mourning his son. . .

It is a wet night, a fine rain is running down the window like tears. A menacing wind howls and groans around the house, as though it were the sorrow of the night sweeping over it. Florence sits alone in her sorrow-filled bedroom, bathed in tears. The clock on the tower strikes midnight. . .

I do not know how it happened but with the very first lines, this whole picture rose vividly before my mind's eye, throwing a brilliant light over all I had read in snatches up to that moment.

I suddenly seemed to sense the death of this unknown boy, and this night, and misery of loneliness and darkness, and the solitude of the place wrapped in the grief of recent death. . . And the mournful dripping of the rain-drops, the groaning and howling of the wind, the sickly trembling of the sapless trees—terrible loneliness of the poor girl and her stern father. And her love for this stern, hard man, and his terrible indifference. . .

The study door is open. . . not more than a hair's breadth. . . but it has always been shut before. Her heart almost stopping, the daughter approaches the crack. In the depths of the room, a lamp is shining, throwing a dim light on the objects around it. The girl stands at the door. Shall she enter or not? Silently she steals away. But the ray of light lying in a thin thread across the marble floor falls on her heart like a ray of heavenly hope. She returns, hardly knowing what she does, grasps the half-opened door and. . . enters.

My brother returned to the room for something, and I barely had time to escape before he entered. I stood there waiting. Would he take the book? Then I would have to wait to find out what happened next. What would that stern man do with the poor little girl who had come to crave a drop of paternal love? Would he drive her away? No, impossible. My heart was beating hard and painfully. Yes, it was impossible. There could not be such cruel people in the world. After all, everything depended on the author, and he would not be able to drive the poor girl back into the solitude of this fearful, terrible night. . . I felt a dreadful longing for him to meet her at last with love and tenderness. It would be so splendid. . . But if. . . ?

My brother came running out wearing his hat, and soon he and his friends all

raced out into the yard. They had gone away somewhere, probably for a long time. I rushed back into the room and seized the book.

"Her father sat at his old table in the middle of the room. He had been arranging some papers, and destroying others. . . the low complainings of the wind were heard without. But not by him. He sat with his eyes fixed on the table, so immersed in thought, that a far heavier tread than the light foot of his child could make, might have failed to rouse him. His face was turned towards her. By the waning lamp, and at that haggard hour, it looked worn and dejected; and in the utter loneliness surrounding him, there was an appeal to Florence that struck home. 'Papa! Papa! Speak to me, dear Papa!' He started at her voice, and leaped up from his seat. . .

"What is the matter?" he said sternly. "Why do you come here? . . ." She saw he knew why—it was written broadly on his face—and dropped her head upon her hands with one prolonged, low cry. Let him remember it in that room, in years to come."

I stood there with the book in my hand, overcome, shaken through and through by the girl's faint cry, by a burst of fury, and the despair of the author himself. . . Why, why did he write this? . . . So terrible and so cruel! He could have written it differently. . . But no. I felt that he could not, that it really was, just like that, that he saw this terrible thing and was as overcome by it as I was. . . And the poor girl's faint cry blended with the despair, pain and anger in his own heart. . .

And I repeated his words with hatred and a thirst for vengeance: yes, yes, yes! He will remember, undoubtedly, undoubtedly he will remember it in the years to come. . .

Like a lightning flash this picture illuminated all the fragments which had flickered past so meaninglessly in my superficial reading. With a pang I recalled all the time I had lost. . . Now I made up my mind to make full use of all that was left, and continued reading eagerly for two hours more, not tearing myself away until my brother arrived. . . I made the acquaintance of Miss Polly, the nurse, so tender to poor Florence; of the sick boy, asking on the seashore what the sea was saying,

with his early wisdom of a sick child. . . And even Toots the lover no longer struck me as so silly. . . Feeling in my bones that my brother would soon be arriving, I raced through page after page, deepening my acquaintance with Florence's friends and enemies. . . And all the time in the background loomed the figure of Mr. Dombey, with a significance drawn from my knowledge that he was doomed to a fearful punishment. Tomorrow on the way to the library I would read how he would "remember it in that room in years to come". He would remember, but of course it would be too late. . . And serve him right!

That night my brother finished the novel and again I heard him now laughing, now striking the table with his fist in anger.

III

In the morning my brother told me: "Here take it along, and mind you're quick about it."

"Tell me," I ventured to ask, "what were you laughing about yesterday evening?"

"You wouldn't understand, you're little and silly yet. . . You don't know what humour is. . . Well, read this bit, then. . . Mr. Toots is trying to propose to Florence, and keeps on going as speechless as though he'd lost his tongue. . ."

And again he burst into ringing, infectious laughter.

"Well, go along with you. I know all about it, you read on the streets, and the Jews are already calling you a "mi-shugginer"¹. All the same, you're still too young to be reading novels. Well, this one you can read if you like, if you can understand it. But see you don't take too long, all the same. Get back here in half an hour—look, I'm writing down the time. . ."

My brother's authority over me was immense, but all the same I knew perfectly well that I would not be back in either half an hour, or a whole hour. The only thing I did not foresee was that for the first time in my life I was to create a kind of public commotion.

With accustomed steps, but rather more slowly than usual, I went along the streets, engrossed in my reading, but at the same time steering my way among the passers-by with my habitual skill. I stopped at corners, sat down on benches by gates, rose and wandered on, deep in the book. I already found

¹ One stricken with madness.

it difficult to follow the main thread of the plot without glancing aside and halting at persons of secondary importance. Everything was so extraordinarily interesting, each person lived his or her own life, every movement, word, gesture etched itself into my memory. I laughed involuntarily when the wise Captain Bunsby, during the lovely Florence's visit to his ship, asked Captain Cuttle: "What'll the ladies drink?" Then I searched for the love-lorn Toots' proposal, jerked out breathlessly: "How d'ye do, Miss Dombey? I'm very well, I thank you: how are you?"

After this, as everybody knows, the young gentleman made the merriest grimaces, but discovering that there was nothing to be so pleased about, emitted a deep sigh, then feeling that sadness was not in place, returned to his merry grimaces, and finally submerged in a bottomless silence. . .

Like my brother, I laughed at poor Toots, attracting the attention of passers-by. It turned out that the instinct which guided my careless steps along the crowded streets had brought me almost to the end of my road. Ahead was Kiev Street, where the library was situated. But in my eager interest in various scenes I was still far from those "years to come" when Mr. Dombey was to recall his cruelty to his daughter.

Probably the St. Panteleimon church (I think that was the name) still stands in Zhitomir not far from Kiev Street. At that time there was a kind of recess like a niche between the projection of the church and the neighbouring house. Seeing this quiet corner, I crept into it, leaned against the wall, and. . . time passed unheeded over my head. . . I noticed neither the street noises nor the quiet passing of the minutes. As though under a spell, I gulped down scene after scene, without any hope of reading to the very end but unable to tear myself away. The church bell rang for evening service. Passers-by would sometimes stop and look at me in my retreat with astonishment. . . Their forms passed across my field of vision like annoying indefinite patches, reminding me of the street. Young Jews—brisk, lively, humorous lads—passed ironical remarks and kept insistently asking something. One would pass on, another would stop. . . The crowd began to grow.

Once I started—I thought I saw my

brother hurrying past, waving his stick. "Impossible!" I comforted myself, but all the same began turning the pages faster. . . Mr. Dombey's second marriage. . . The proud Edith. . . She loves Florence and scorns Mr. Dombey. Ah, here, now it's beginning. . . "Let him remember. . ."

But here the spell was unexpectedly broken. My brother who had hurried to the library and left in perplexity, not finding me there, noticed the crowd of young Jews milling around my hiding place. Without knowing the cause of their curiosity, he pushed his way through them and. . . My brother was quick-tempered and allowed no infringement of his privileges, so he quickly entered my refuge and seized the book; instinctively I tried to hold it, not letting it out of my hand or taking my eyes from it. . . Great excitement among the audience, who filled the street with their laughter and shouts. . .

"Idiot! The library'll be closed in a minute!" cried my brother and tearing the book away, ran along the street. I followed him, confused and ashamed, still under the spell of what I had been reading, followed by a cluster of Jewish lads. An idyllic picture had sprung up before my eyes from the last hastily turned pages—Florence married. She has a boy and a girl and—there is some old man taking the children for a walk, looking sadly and tenderly at his grand daughter. . .

"Is it possible? Did they really make it up?" I asked my brother, who met me on his way back from the library, pleased that he had managed to change his book and would not be without one over the holiday. He was in a good humour and did nothing more than laugh at me.

"Now you really are a mishugginer. . . Become famous for all time. . . You want to know if Florence forgave him? Yes, yes, she forgave him. Dickens always ends up with a feast of benevolence and peacemaking."

Dickens. . . the thanklessness of childhood. I had never looked at the name of the author who had given me such pleasure, but this name, so silvery and pleasant to the ear, immediately became fixed in my memory. . .

And that is how I first—one might really say *en passant*—became acquainted with Dickens. . .

A JOURNEY THROUGH THE PARTISAN LAND

The author of these lines, Boris Yampolsky, is special correspondent of *Izvestia*, one of the big Moscow dailies. In 1943 he flew to a partisan column in Byelorussia where he spent five months. Travelling with the partisans, on foot, horseback, cart, machine-gun chariot or partisan whippet tank, he journeyed over a thousand kilometres in the German rear, from Mogilyov to the Brest Region.—Ed.

THROUGH THE MIDNIGHT SKY

I arrived at the aerodrome on a still, dark night. The sentinel, in his huge sheepskin greatcoat, on duty on the watch-tower, looked as if he were standing among the stars and directing the motions of the heavenly bodies. On the flying-field engines were roaring giving the impression of an invisible workshop.

A partisan plane stood on the runway.

One of the ground personnel hitched a parachute on my back and said:

"At dawn today the Germans tried to reach the partisan air-field. They were driven off. If all is quiet there the plane will land. If it isn't you'll have to jump.

"The parachute opens automatically. Hook on to the ring, make straight for the cabin door and good luck!"

... The engines roared. A wind rose on the flying-field and suddenly we found ourselves in the sky among the golden lights of the stars.

We are bound west, overtaking the wind and the birds flying to warm countries. It looks just as if the stars were flying with us.

At midnight we crossed the front-line.

It zig-zagged over the earth like a flaming saw. We beheld frequent flashes and tracer-lines of an unremitting artillery duel. Flaming eyes opened in the earth: German searchlights groping for us. The plane plunged into their white beams and in that deathly light I saw all my fellow-travellers with their new tommy-guns and grenades in their belts.

Outside the window of the plane hung green and red strings of tracer-bullets and a leaden bee buzzed past my ear. But of a sudden the plane dived, swept above the roofs of some village,

zoomed aloft again and shot into a cloud. The cloud was long and black, like night.

It wasn't our pilot's first flight into the German rear. When the front was at Stalingrad he landed at the Dnieper. He's an old friend of the partisans in the Crimea, Minsk and Vilnius. When they see his machine they say: "Ilya is in the air." He brings TNT, mines, anti-tank rifles, chocolate, sulfidine, piroxiline, newspapers and letters.

He has had to land on mountains, on forest clearings, in the streets of partisan villages.

We alighted on an island amid a forest swamp. The eerie hoot of a brown owl rang out, but, on the instant, a gun shot drowned it out. The nearby German garrison had heard the roar of the partisan aircraft flying low over them and had fired at the forest. Immediately machine-guns went into action some way off. The partisan outposts were engaged.

Amid the din of battle we unloaded from the plane new snipers' rifles with telescopic sights, green cases of TNT and medicaments, mail bags, a new novel by Priestley, and books, still redolent with printers ink, on topography and tactics.

German shells burst in the forest and in the swamp. From out of the gloom appear waggons with wounded partisans. They lie at full length and gaze at the stars. They are taken from the stretchers to the plane. To the accompaniment of the unflagging artillery duel the plane's headlights flash a moment, lighting the way ahead, then the plane speeds across the sylvan air-field, and barely missing the trunks of age-old giants of the woods, rises into the sky and disappears among the stars. And just as soon as the sound of the engine

fades away so the battle on the ground begins to die down.

Partisans crowd round us—lads, old stalwarts and women. They present a great variety in clothing, features and arms: Red Army greatcoats, peasant cloaks, felt hats, Russian, Polish, Rumanian and Dutch rifles.

They take us to dugouts scooped out of the side of a hill. Huge dishes of mutton steam on the table. Then we drink tea made with moor-berry juice and woodland honey.

In the "Postal" dugout girls are sorting the mail we have brought, arranging it according to the columns. Mounted men armed with tommy-guns and grenades are waiting for it at the entrance. They are the partisan postmen. They will carry the letters and newspapers through the forests and swamps of Polesye Region, by roads along which German columns are marching; past towns still occupied by the Germans. They are letters from mothers, fathers, wives and sisters in Moscow, Sverdlovsk, Novosibirsk, Tashkent, Baku, Kharkov.

THE ROUND-UP

We mounted horses. Their hoofs rattled on the logs of the causeway the partisans had built across the impassable swamp. In one night I found myself far from Moscow, in the depths of Byelorussia, at a place where, just as on an icefloe in the ocean, Moscow is called "the Mainland".

It is midnight but as light as day. The sky is lit with flames and in the glow the forest stands out on the horizon, and clouds sail by above. The swamp-land of Byelorussia is ablaze.

For many years the Byelorussian people dug canals, built dams and bridges and drained the swamps. In the place of whispering reeds a sea of golden grain rippled in the breeze. German airmen dropped bottles of combustibles on the reclaimed boglands and now they are burning day and night. Smoke rolls over the swamps and from the sky ashes fall like rain. Ashes cover the ground, our faces, the horses. . .

We ride into a vast wilderness.

The roads are overgrown with high grass and the fields with rank weeds.

Black, burned villages. Felled orchards, and in them, like tombstones, overturned

bee-hives. Tall black crosses at the cross-roads. A very graveyard of a country.

We are riding through what were once the most populated districts of Polesye Region. For three days and three nights we ride and see not a single village, not a solitary house. In all those three days and three nights we met only a boy tending a cow in a mist-covered field and a half-blind old woman who emerged from her hole in the ground at the sound of our hoof-beats.

Not once did we hear a dog bark, a cock crow, a wellwinch creak or a bucket rattle. Not a voice, not a rustle! Only the resounding drum-like rub-a-dub of the horses' hoofs!

We canter through a long village street. There are no cottages. On either side, behind the fences of interwoven branches, amid the blackened bricks, are crosses.

On all sides stretches the sombre, charred earth. In the swamps are black tree-stumps. The hillocks harbour fraternal graves with huge crosses and adorned with wreathes of maple in autumn yellows and reds. You can see from afar. While you are yet at one cross the next appears in sight. And so we ride from hillock to hillock, from cross to cross—a road of mourning.

It was from the half-blind old woman who emerged from the ground at the clatter of the horses' hoofs that I first heard the fearful words: "Round-up!"

The Germans ringed in the area and closed in from all sides.

The villagers fled to the swamp. Only cripples and invalids stayed behind. The Germans enticed them with sweets, cigarettes, packets of salt and baking powder. Women and children fell for the bait. They gathered in the villages.

And then it began.

In one of the biggest villages in the Pinsk Region all the inhabitants were burned in the church. In another all the children were burned in the school. In a third the people were burned on bonfires. In the fourth they were burned in their homes. S.S. men stood and listened to the screams of the people writhing in the flames and saw to it that nobody escaped through the windows, that they burned to the last woman and child. When the Germans withdrew, their faces were black from the smoke.

The wind moans, ashes swirl, Ashes settle on our faces and on the horses.

At last we begin to meet people.

Victims of the round-up. People on crutches with blackened, fire-scarred faces. A girl at the well with blind eyes. An old man silenced forever—his tongue cut out. A human stump, armless and legless. Propped up against the mound of a dug-out he listens to the sighing forest.

After the great calamity the people here have lost all conception of Anno Domini, all recollection of former life. Here they say: "That was before or after the round-up." No earthquake, flood, hurricane or plague has ever caused such devastation, has ever brought people such affliction as the German round-up.

I am penning these words in a dugout, tunnelled deep into a hill in the forest and camouflaged to tone with the face of the earth. It was only by sparks from the chimney that I found this human habitation. It is just as if I had found my way into a cave of the stone age.

The tunnel goes deep beneath the roots of the trees. It is hard to tell how many people are here. Three tiers of bunks line the walls at the entrance. In the depths people lie on the floor. When we enter, tommy-guns in hand, a woman at the entrance screams. Sobs rend the air. The people's eyes are dimmed with the darkness, their senses mazed with the silence, and they start at every rustle. Only the trees sigh, an owl hoots or a wolf creeps up and glares into the den with green eyes.

In the swinging cradles are babies with wax-like faces. The sick peer out from bundles of rags and grimy sheep-skin coats: delirium, fumes, tears.

I sit in the den until morning, there is no space to stretch my limbs. People, like wraiths, pass by. By the light of the brands their faces are indistinguishable. A girl at a spinning wheel is twirling out a thread. She sits all night spinning a thread, continuous, unending as the people's woe, sad and yearning.

Someone, crouched beneath the brand is weaving bast shoes.

An old man with frost-bitten face is sitting on the ground and slowly turning a hand-mill with wooden mill-stones. He grinds hour after hour, all night long, day after day so as to get flour for his bread. And when I speak to him of a wind-mill, his eyes shine—spreading wind-mill sails, throwing shadows across the field, seem to him like some remote fairy-tale heard in childhood.

While the old man grinds, an old woman pounds in the mortar. Thump, thump, thump! By midnight she has a few handfuls of millet. She pours it into water and puts it on the fire. The fire here, just as in prehistoric times, burns always in the home. An eternal fire which all watch lest it go out. . . . If it dies, it is a great calamity. Fire must then be sought again.

I gaze at that life in the hole in the earth and think: that's what will happen to all the world, to all humanity, if the German is not exterminated.

I ride through fields, hazy in the autumn mist. Two peasant women are harnessed to a wooden harrow. Behind them follows a boy, barefoot, in a white shirt, with a tray swinging on his chest, scattering seed.

The autumn wind moans. Leaves drop and swirl in giddy spirals. They fall like yellow rain, covering the earth with a thick carpet.

Weeping comes from a primitive arrangement shaded by a chequered kerchief. A blue-eyed boy is lying in a tiny cradle slung from three sticks. His father is far away at the front. His mother drags the harrow over the sodden autumn earth and it seems that the ground is stone to her, and the lowering clouds a leaden yoke upon her back.

There's not a bed, not a chair, not a frying pan nor bucket anywhere. For a hundred miles around you'll find neither a needle nor a knife. All has burned in the German fire. Here they eat potato bread, season it with potash—the fertilizer of the peat bog,—and smoke birch leaves. Here I saw wooden knives, wooden needles, stone axes, just as if they had dropped from a book on ancient history.

The Germans think: all is burnt, the ashes will be scattered by the winds and that's the end.

Never were they more mistaken! The image of the mother lives on imperishable with her son, the face of the murdered child is in the memory of the father. The martyred sister is forever before the eyes of the brother. The tenacious memory of the people cannot be burned by fire, slain by the knife, or strangled by the rope.

Not far from the River Sluch, on the high stone foundation of the school where the Germans burned 250 children, is a burial mound raised by the people. The wooden cross bears the epitaph: "The

people's curse on the German murderers to all eternity! May the memory of those who died in agony be unfading!"

The Germans march by. They stop, break the wooden cross and scatter the grave. But the very next day, as if shooting up from the earth, a new cross appears bearing the same epitaph: "The people's curse on the German murderers to all eternity! May the memory of those who died in agony be unfading!"

The Germans come again, scatter the grave, plough it over, so that the place is unrecognizable, so that no memory remains.

But you cannot plough over the memory of the people. Again the mound and the cross rise on the school foundation.

Towns will crumble to dust, rivers change their course, old roads vanish, new ones appear but never will those burial mounds vanish, the mounds of the XX century, just as the mounds of Batu have not disappeared.

THE FOREST GENERAL

We passed across the bog by the light of the moon and emerged on the firm soil of the forest. Decayed logs emitted a ghostly efflorescence, lighting the path. We trod upon them with our heavy boots and extinguished them but when we had passed they again gleamed in the night.

Dawn flecked the east, but Vassili Ivanovich, the partisan general in a plain Red Army greatcoat, had not yet slept. We sat in a partisan dugout, large and spacious, the walls lined with the white silk of a parachute. It was lit by a partisan lamp conjured out of an A.A. shell case.

The ancient primal forest rustled and sighed and when the wind swept over the tree-tops it seemed as if long columns of horses were galloping through the forest. Somewhere in the gloom a wolf howled.

Suddenly the earth shook, explosions sounded from afar. "A partisan concert", said Vassili Ivanovich.

That was partisan columns of the formation under his command blowing up a hundred kilometres of a Byelorussian trunk line. The explosions continued for over an hour and sounded like an artillery cannonade.

Vassili Ivanovich was a veteran of the Civil War. Returning to the pursuits of peace he became director of a machine and tractor station and, in recent years, one of the most prominent government officials

of Byelorussia. When the great calamity descended on Byelorussia he and a group of friends went off to a remote islet in the forest swampland.

At first they were seven. They lived by the fire. In winter they cleared away the embers and slept on the fire-warmed earth covering themselves with blankets woven from hay. At night huge rats gathered from all sides. The sentry bombarded them with charred stumps from the fire. They retired only to creep back again.

Here on the island Vassili Ivanovich established his headquarters, and it was not plans of building that occupied his mind, but plans of ambushing Germans; not of grain, peat and electricity that he thought day and night but of TNT for Germans; not of how to lift more beets that year but of how to bury more Germans that month.

That was a time when on every telegraph pole hung a Byelorussian, when in every Byelorussian village there was a gallows, and every well was a fraternal grave. Not a word of Byelorussian was heard in a month for a hundred miles around. Songs died away, cottages emptied; for ever, it seemed. Unceasing was the rumble of German tanks, the roar of German bombers, the swishing of German bombs and the barking of German soldiers.

It was precisely then, in February 1942, that on sledges flying the red flag and carrying machine-guns raised from the river bottom, Vassili Ivanovich's column swept through the region for ninety days on end, blowing up bilges, burning German stores, mining railways, crushing enemy garrisons, executing turncoats and traitors, and raising the subdued people to battle. And the people rose.

Men who had never fought, men of the most peaceful pursuits, became leaders of columns. In my journeying over the partisan roads of Byelorussia I saw many of them. Victor, the drawing master, Alexei Ivanovich, the surgeon, Zhora, the former company cook, Nikolai Borissovich, the accountant, the teacher of history known as Mitka-Kazak, Grigori, the leading light of a collective farm, Vassili Timofeyevich, a district executive committee chairman, and many, many others.

Nobody supplied them with arms. They supplied themselves. They salvaged hidden weapons from wells and rivers, from pits in the forest and cellars. They won food from the Germans in battle. Nobody

taught them the art of war. They learned by experience in forest and street fighting when the enemy was all around.

Nobody showed the people the road to the partisans. But after a month they had swollen to a hundred, in a year to a thousand and now to tens of thousands. It was as if the trees told the way, leaves whispered it or the very ground spoke of it—you had only to place your ear to it.

Hatred for the enemy would neither let them eat, drink nor sleep while the Germans were still about.

At night, by the light of a home-made lamp, the two partisan generals Vassili Ivanovich and Joseph Alexandrovich traced on the map my route to the partisan columns of Byelorussia.

The pencil traced for me a new, unknown map of Byelorussia. Where in the ordinary map were blank spots of impassable bog and the deep green of primeval forests, numerous red circles appeared denoting partisan camps, and blue circles indicating the woodland settlements of Byelorussian peasants who had fled to the refuge of the forest from the German-occupied areas. Instead of the old highways through the forest and bog the pencil traced new partisan ways and paths.

Before my eyes the great partisan country sprang into being and I saw that throughout Byelorussia from Vitebsk to Brest, from Bobruisk to Byelostok there was not a corner without its partisan column.

ON THE PARTISAN ROAD

At dawn I left Vassili Ivanovich's camp. With me went two partisan orderlies: "Father", an old man, a green frontier-guard cap on his head and a Tommy-gun slung across his chest, a partisan of 1918, who could guide you with his eyes shut along all the secret paths throughout Byelorussia, and the young partisan, Vanya from the Ukraine, a scout, who had travelled Byelorussia from end to end in the past two years.

In the bright moonlight the forest seems enchanted. We ride beneath ancient oaks. Somewhere a cock crows.

"That's not a German cock, is it?" I ask Father.

He grins.

"No, more likely a partisan cock. Last year we routed and drove out all the Ger-

man police garrisons from these parts. This is now a partisan zone and the road we are travelling is in our hands entirely."

It was the first time I had really seen the partisan road. It runs where formerly the foot of man has never trod. A passage has now been cut in the dense forest. The forest ends and the road emerges onto a broad swamp. The horses' hoofs clatter on the logs of the partisan causeway. We cross the swamp and enter a field. A highway runs across it, linking two big Byelorussian towns now occupied by the Germans. Before the war I rode over that highway. Day and night cars and lorries, horses and people streamed along it. Now it is deserted. Tall grass has overgrown it. The Germans will not risk using it. On the other hand the partisan road is a thriving artery. All day long partisans on foot and horseback pass us. Liaison men and scouts gallop by carrying tidings of German transports and trains.

Now we have overtaken a group of partisans moving on foot. They are demolition men with mines under their arms and yellow balls of TNT in packets, they are bound for the asphalted German highway. They are led by a veritable giant in a leather jacket, the famous lorry-straffer known as Parik.

"I'm Parik," he says simply on being introduced, sure that we have heard all about him before. Parik and his men attack single or straggling German motor vehicles and waggons. Not long ago he brought back to his partisan camp two German five-tonners loaded with white flour and sugar.

The group had now been detailed to mine a stretch of the highway. On either side of the road the partisans gouge out deep "rat holes" in which they place explosives and big artillery shells with camouflaged mines attached. When the wheel of a German lorry touches the mine a whole length of the road flies sky-high. "I stick up leaflets on the telegraph poles along the roadside," says Parik. "Let them read all about it!"

Oxen appear in the distance. A long silent column, just like a funeral procession. On the waggons are black, charred wash-tubs, singed pillows; feathers scatter in the wind. Old men growl: "Gee-up!" Children whimper. Women with kiddies in their arms trudge along beside the waggons. They are from a village burned down by the Germans because the partisans had

put up there for a night. Now the peasants are off to the woods and the partisans.

Again we enter a forest. Giant pines rear aloft to the sky. Suddenly we hear the barking of watch-dogs, the lowing of cattle, the rub-a-dub of washing boards, and people's voices.

We ride nearer and before us appears a whole settlement. Children play around primitive huts. Waggon stand outside, their shafts pointing to the sky. In the corrals cows are grouped among the pines. Lengths of white linen are bleaching in the sun on the fields. Flames leap in a huge stove out in the open. Several housewives are busy round it.

Sheaves stand between the trees. That is grain the peasants have hidden from the Germans.

A mill stands at a forest stream. From time to time large, white-covered waggons roll away from it.

Here in the woods, under the protection of the partisans, live people burnt out of their homes, refugees from concentration camps and partisans' families. The forest settlement has been named Davydovka, after the Russian poet, partisan of the National War of 1812.

Among the trees some peasant boys are crawling over the ground dragging baskets, feeling in the grass and gathering something. You might have thought they were gathering mushrooms or picking berries but on cantering up nearer I saw in their baskets old cartridges, green with age and the rain. They were Russian and German cartridges dropped here during the big battles of 1941. They were being gathered, dried and cleaned. Later I saw how they were delivered to the partisan camp, dry, shining cartridges ready for use. Presenting them to the commander of the partisan column the peasants said: "Bumpoff Jerry and we'll bring you more".

Here I met the four brothers—Artyom, Ivan, Dmitri and Denis—who supplied arms to a whole partisan column, commanded incidentally by their elder brother Isaac. The column has not only rifles but tommy-guns, light and heavy machine-guns, mortars and guns and a large supply of shells. Every day the brothers go off to the forest and the swamp and bring in ammunition hidden previously in their secret dumps.

We move on. Through the pine branches we see peasants moving. They

are in long white shirts and carry rifles, spades, saws and axes. Father shouts:

"Halt, who goes there?"

"Men of the Chapayev column," comes the reply.

We continue on our way. Again there's rustling and sound of footsteps. Again Father shouts:

"Halt, who goes there?"

"Men of the Suvorov column."

And so we travel all night arriving at another camp with the dawn.

THE CAMP

When the mist dispersed the golden rays of the sun revealed a regular town in the forest.

Partisan dugouts stretched in a straight line, here they are called "budans". They are cabins built of pine logs, are half let into the ground and camouflaged with pine branches. The budans have large windows, inside they are light, clean and warm. Partisans come here to rest up after long expeditions.

As you pass through the camp it seems that you have come to a garrison receiving its supplies from German army stores. Dozens of black German lorries captured in battle, their wheels resting on wooden shoes, are lined up in the street. They are awaiting the arrival of the Red Army.

On the beds inside the dugouts you will see thick German blankets and ground-sheets. The commanders have German army compasses in black cases and mica glasses and also Zeiss binoculars. The partisan barber has nothing but German instruments. Even the regimental drum is made from the hide of a German ass. The men smoke partisan-grown tobacco in German pipes bearing Leipzig and Munich trade marks.

We hear the rumble of a steam mill. The partisan oxen hauled it from a German occupied village. There is a crowd round the mill—the partisans grind the grain for the whole region.

A tar-works let into the ground smokes among the bushes. Ox hides are drying on long poles fixed between the pines. Steam rises from enormous iron vats. This is a partisan tannery.

At a healthy distance from the camp is the partisan arsenal. Bellows make the sparks fly in the smithy, housed in a dug-out roofed with turf. The smith is putting the finishing touches to a "home-made" tommy-gun.

Mechanics and fitters are busy around a green whippet tank. They have assembled it from parts of wrecked machines left on the battle-field. And so it happened that in the middle of a scrap a partisan whippet tank suddenly dashed from the woods. The Hitlerites were certain it was a dummy tank. The first German lines held their sides laughing and shouting: "Russ plywood, Russ plywood!" But "Russ plywood" burst into the German lines and dispersed and drove the Germans through the forest in a way the survivors were hardly likely to forget.

Girls working in sheds are packing gun-cotton into grenades. "One of these grenades will send a heavy German machine flying into the air just like a bird," one of the girls says.

A partisan engineer is working on a machine of his own design, pressing captured German cartridges to the right calibre for the Russian rifle.

The partisans' food industry is laid out in an adjacent clearing. Mutton is stewing in cauldrons slung over fires built in large pits. In the bakery round white rusks for the wounded are baking in heated iron barrels. Alongside are the sausage factory and the cheese vats. In the forest store-house are barrels of yellow boiled butter, cartwheels of pressed cheese, chains of sausage, and tubs of honey. These are the dry rations for partisans going out on long expeditions.

Sowing machines buzz in a large shed. The tailors are a miniature league of nations: tall, thin Jean, a French infantryman from Lyons who escaped from his battalion and recalled in the forest the trade he had followed in Lyons; Petrovich, a local village tailor who had never left his native hamlet all his life, and a number of others. They are all turning German greatcoats into partisan body-warmers, and jackets. An old furrier from Slutsk is putting the finishing touches to some white fox pelts for the jacket of the column's chief of staff.

In another shed bearded cobblers squat on low stools stitching yellow top-boots for the partisans.

I often saw partisan leaflets on the telegraph poles along the German military roads, at the country mills, in the woods, in the villages and on the fields. They roused the people to the struggle against the occupationalists, called on them to

gather arms and to kill the Germans. Every leaflet bore the mark of one and the same firm: "The Partisan Printshop".

And then in the thick of the forest, under ancient oaks, I saw a little log cabin. The familiar odour of printers' ink assailed my nostrils as soon as I entered the door. At home-made frames stood two women and a boy, picking type for the current number of the partisan newspaper *The People's Avenger*. Three rifles leaned against the frames and two Mills hand-grenades dangled from the boy's belt.

They were picking type for an item on a battle that had taken place that night at the railway.

The partisans had pierced the boiler of an engine with a bullet from an anti-tank rifle and attacked the train. They bombarded the cars with grenades. Hand to hand fighting swayed back and forth between the wheels of the cars and in the cars themselves; over 500 German officers and men were killed or wounded.

The item was written by the paper's editor Anissim, a former teacher. He had just galloped back from the scene of action. He had a wound in the hand and his manuscript was stained with blood.

I noticed that the item was put together with different sorts of type. It appeared that the set was made up of type from many printshops in different towns. Type-setters had smuggled them out in their pockets, in the padding of their greatcoats, in loaves of bread, in bottles of milk.

The type-setters Olga and Tatyana had been colleagues of the editor at school. One had taught mathematics, the other physics. They had learned the type-setters art here in the forest.

Fifteen-year-old printer Vassya was cutting paper while waiting for the type to be checked up. Today's number would come out on paper wrappings of TNT brought by plane. The TNT had gone to blow up a German train, while the paper, bearing the passionate words of the partisans' call, would pass around the towns and villages to blow up the "new order".

The printing press had been designed and shaped from timber by editor Anissim. Vassya is a smart and fast printer. He is an orphan. The partisans picked him up among the ashes of a burned down village. Owing to his tender years he had been detailed to the printshop. It is too tame for him, though, he is all on pins to go into

action. Somewhere in the swamp he found an old rifle without a breech, cleaned it, got a breech from a partisan, likewise cartridges, and now feels himself a real soldier.

The newspaper was still in the press when hoofbeats rang out in the clearing. Riders from the columns and villages had come for the papers. Editor Anissim showed me two boys from the nearest small town who would take the papers and steal back into town at night. One of them, a lad named Arkasha, promised to put a copy into the desk of the police chief.

"Well," said editor Anissim when the "paper boys" had ridden off, "the papers have been distributed, now let us get down to the book publishing business."

I took that as a joke, but the editor pulled out the proofs of a booklet of verse by a Byelorussian poet—partisan Anatoli Ostreiko. The book was called *The Slutsk Bell*. It contained twenty-two poems written on the march, beside the camp-fire, at partisan bivouacs and between battles. The book was arranged excellently. The cover had a picture and the initial letter of every poem was an artistic decoration. The illustrations were drawn and cut on wood blocks by the editor. And so Anissim was editor, fighter, correspondent, printshop mechanic, artist, zincographer and despatcher.

It was with a feeling approaching veneration that I gazed on that tiny partisan printshop from whence truth and wrath went out to all the ends of Byelorussia.

CAMP-FIRE TALES

I lived at one camp for a whole week. Every day the people changed. Some went out on expeditions while others returned from operations.

In the evenings we gathered round the camp-fire. Towns were recalled, friends and relatives and the remote and dear "mainland" cut off from us by the German divisions.

By the fire light I jotted down some of the tales I heard.

Sasha Zolotoy

"Once a young fellow came to our column," was the way Ivan Ivanovich, chief of staff in one of the columns, began his story.

"I am a painter," he said, "take me into the column."

"We want soldiers, not painters," he was told. "We'll take you not to draw pictures but to kill Germans."

"I'll both draw and kill," replied the lad.

"News of his arrival spread and soon he was the most sought-after man in the column. We hadn't seen our homes for two or three years and everyone wanted to send his portrait to his folks. Sasha drew us just as we were, in our big fur caps, tommy-guns slung across our chests and sabres by our sides, and that pleased everyone. In one action we captured some paints from a German baggage train but they were all one colour—gold. Sasha decorated our portraits with gold paint and they looked real smart. That also tickled our fancy. He was nicknamed Sasha Zolotoy¹.

"Once our group went out on operations to a big highway much used by German motor transport. Sasha was with us. All night long he kept to himself and painted something on a sheet of white cardboard, but would show it to nobody. In the morning we took some mines and TNT and set off. Sasha brought his painting rolled into a tube. He also took a pair of ox-horns and a small mine.

"We reached the road at night. Sasha unrolled the tube and by the light of the moon we saw a large caricature of Hitler. Sasha crawled up to the road and nailed the cartoon to a telegraph pole. Then he fixed the horns to Hitler's forehead and mined them. The horns only had to be tugged to pull the fuse and set off the mine."

"In ambush the next morning we watched a curious scene. A green army-van carrying German soldiers came along the road. When it drew level with the pole decorated with the cartoon an N.C.O. jumped out of the van and, swearing like a trooper, pulled viciously at the horns. The mine exploded and the N.C.O. went up in pieces. Scared by the explosion the horse galloped into the field. The soldiers no less scared than the horse, jumped out of the van on the run, blazing away at goodness knows what.

"Since then Sasha Zolotoy has been our recognized inventor of surprise-packets.

"Not long ago he mined a gramophone and went off with it along the road to—

¹ Zolotoy is Russian for golden.—Ed.

wards a German garrison. I was in ambush by the roadside and saw a pretty scene. In the distance appeared Sasha Zolotoy's waggon. Pretending to be three sheets in the wind he bawled out a song. A sentry at a German post opened fire at him. Sasha lurched off to the bushes leaving the waggon on the road. The sentry called his comrades from a blockhouse and five of them went up to the waggon. There was nothing in it except for the gramophone, a bottle of raw spirit, sausage and some eggs.

"I heard a German N.C.O. turn to the soldier who had fired and say:

"Heinrich, you've interrupted his celebration, let's carry it on for him. We'll finish off his vodka."

"Standing by the waggon they took pulls at the bottle turn and turn about and made free with the provisions.

"And this little box of tricks," said the N.C.O., pointing to the gramophone, 'will liven up our dreary life.'

"Let's try it," said private Heinrich, and opened the lid. 'Aha, there's a record already on!'

"He wound up the gramophone and the strains of the well-known Russian song *Andryusha* were wafted on the breeze. The Germans listened with interest. Suddenly, in the middle of the song, a deafening report rang out and the gramophone exploded with terrific force. Two of the Germans were killed on the spot, the rest wounded.

"Once Sasha contrived a home-made tommy-gun. To all appearances it was no different from the factory variety but inside it was of an original design—it was mined. Sasha Zolotoy dropped it on a road used by the Germans. Driving by some Germans noticed the tommy-gun, picked it up and began examining it. About ten men gathered round. Somebody tugged at the breech and the tommy-gun exploded, killing the German holding it and wounding all the rest.

"Since then the Germans in our district touch nothing lying on the roads. Once I saw some Germans riding by open furious fire at a metal water-flask thinking that it was a mine. They riddled it with lead and only then plucked up courage and picked it up. It wasn't mined—somebody had merely lost it.

"I've just heard that Sasha Zolotoy

is making a new 'surprise-packet'."

"Now I'll tell you of a partisan clergyman," said Boris, the scout, nicknamed "Gipsy".

Father Andrei

"Father Andrei is the priest of one of the big parishes of Western Byelorussia. I met him in a little hamlet in the partisan-occupied area.

"By the roadside, at the outskirts, stood a tiny, wooden, time-blackened church. The strains of solemn hymn singing came from its open doors. We dismounted and went into the church. Inside were many women. They were praying and weeping. Not long before the Germans had visited the village, burnt down the cottages and killed all the young men ostensibly for partisan activities although not one of them belonged to the partisan column. And now in the church yard it was dark with crosses while inside it was bright from funeral candles.

"At the altar I saw an old priest. He sent up a prayer, supplicating victory for Russian Armies. His strong voice filled the whole church, rising above the weeping and the drone of praying women. It was the voice of a man who believed in his prayer, in the victory of truth on earth. This voice of confidence pacified the people and gradually stopped the weeping of the women who began fervently to whisper their prayers.

"At the end of the service I introduced myself to Father Andrei. He was about sixty years old. His long grey hair fell around his handsome countenance like a frame of silver. Father Andrei invited me home. He lived in the largest and the most handsome house in the village. It had been given to him by the partisans. During one of their operations the partisans had saved Father Andrei from death and brought him here to this village in the partisan zone.

"Here is the story Father Andrei told me:

"For many years I was the priest of one of the largest parishes in this region. One night there came a terrific hammering at my door. I opened it. Several hulking red-haired brutes poured into the room. Seeing me in my robe and with my long hair they yelled:

"A priest, a priest! Money!"

"I told them in German that I had no 45

money of my own, but only the church funds.

"'All the better,' said their commander, a man with the insignia of an N.C.O. 'Hand it over.'

"'Take it,' I said, 'I will not give it to you myself, it does not belong to me. It belongs to the parishioners, payment for church candles.'

"'The soldiers hacked open a trunk and when they saw the money, their eyes gleamed. They started to quarrel but the N.C.O. took all the money himself and the dispute stopped on the instant.

"'They demanded the church keys. Under threat of shooting I unlocked the gates. They led their horses into its splendid stone building, started a bonfire in the middle and forced me to be present while they, in their drunken debauchery, desecrated the church. After drinking themselves into a state of beastliness, they put on wedding crowns and menacing me with their tommy-guns forced me to go through the marriage ceremony of marrying them to each other.'"

"I glanced at Father Andrei. Tears stood in his eyes. There was a knock at the front door and I heard a child's voice. It was Ksyusha, Father Andrei's adopted daughter. During the round-up the Germans had murdered her parents and Father Andrei had given Ksyusha a home.

"He is a favourite with his parishioners and helps them in every way he can. While I was at his house many peasants came to him.

"An old woman came to ask him to write a letter to her son. Not long ago the partisans had brought her a letter by plane from him. He was a Red Army pilot.

"Then a woman came to ask him to go to her sick child. In his youth Father Andrei had studied medicine and now he was treating the peasants.

"An old man came to order Mass for his son who had been killed. His son had been a partisan and going out on reconnaissance a few days ago had run foul of a German ambushade. He had fought single-handed against five, had killed one, wounded two others but perished himself. His father had just returned from the solemn partisan burial. His coffin had been lowered into the grave amid the thunder of a partisan artillery salute. But the old

man had come to the priest to ask him to pray for his son in church, to God, in whom he himself had believed all his life.

"Just as I was getting ready to leave there came another knock at the door. Doffing their caps partisans armed with tommy-guns and grenades entered the room. They gave Father Andrei leaflets signed by the Metropolitan which had been brought from the "mainland" by partisan plane. Father Andrei put on his glasses, read through the leaflet attentively, and immediately began to put on his cloak preparatory to taking the leaflets round to the peasants' houses.

"I bade Father Andrei a hearty good-bye, respecting him as a clergyman who had not deserted his parishioners in a time of trial and sorrow. . ."

AT A GERMAN HIGHWAY

I spent a whole day, from dawn to dusk, in ambush at one of the main German highways that runs like an arrow from Poland, through all Byelorussia, to the front.

While still ten kilometres from the road the wind brought the smell of charred timber. Flames had caught the dry grass and spread into a sea of fire. There were black birches and black pines in the woods, trees without branches like people with amputated limbs.

A bull floundering in the forest swamp was bellowing. People and waggons dotted the country. The Germans were burning down a big old Byelorussian village.

That morning the villagers had woken up as usual, as they had yesterday, as they had a hundred years ago. The housewives lit the stoves. The winches creaked at the wells. The soldiers' wives harnessed themselves to the harrows and hauled them over the firm, sticky soil: the Germans had confiscated the horses of all Red Army men's families.

Suddenly from the railway line six German guns had opened up at the village, firing incendiary shells. Into the mist of flames, screams and sobbing drove German motor-cyclists. The soldiers ran from cottage to cottage, pulled the hot bread out of the ovens, lapped up cream from the jugs and with faces smeared with cream dashed on, firing at the geese and fowls in the yards and cramming them into kit-bags.

When the partisans and I galloped up the village was no more. In a Russian village, after a fire, the stoves and chimneys remain, like black monuments of the past. In Byelorussia, the stoves are built on wooden foundations so that after a fire nothing at all is left except a heap of smoking bricks.

The feathers of slaughtered geese were floating about the streets.

Along the highway forests and villages burn day and night.

The Germans are afraid of trees, bushes, reeds in the swamps, mist, darkness, of everything that hides from them a foreign land where the forest, strange and fearful to the German spirit, rustles and sighs eternally. They are afraid of the Byelorussian forest where grenades grow on the trees, where tree stumps fire like cannons and where death stares at the Germans from the windows of every house.

THE ROAD TO THE FORTRESS

In this region of virgin forests the Germans have only one way of retreat—the highways. The railway, blown up by the partisans, is derelict. Nothing was of any avail, neither blockhouses nor pillboxes, neither armoured trains nor tall fences on both sides of the track.

We came out at the fifty-third kilometre along the line and we saw how it had been trimmed by the partisans.

It looked as though a terrific hurricane had swept along the tracks, knocking down the telegraph poles, up-ending sleepers and twisting the rails into enormous arcs.

Crossing the railway we pushed on to the highway by night, crawling over the fire-swept earth—everything had been burned for two kilometres around.

We came to a wide asphalted road.

That road is like a pump sucking the people's blood and wealth out of Byelorussia. Day and night lorries with grain and timber and vans packed with tall cheval-glasses, silver samovars and pianos rumble along it to the west. A herd of cattle and a troop of horses urged on by motor-cyclists trot along in the same direction. While to the east come nothing but huge black empty lorries and tall German and Hungarian vans.

The road bristles with fortifications.

There is a German garrison in every village. The broad windows have been transformed into narrow loop-holes, the doors blocked with sand and stone. Machine-guns stand at the corners of the houses.

But that is not all. Between the villages strong-posts are being put up in a hurry. They are sentry-boxes dug into the ground, surrounded by a fortress wall four or five feet thick built of timber, earth and steel girders.

On conquered soil the conqueror is compelled to destroy everything around, build a fortified highway so as to withdraw his soldiers and equipment back to his wolf's den.

IN BROAD DAYLIGHT

We are in ambush at a cross-roads. A by-road leading from the forest joins the highway. A strange and savage scene confronts our eyes. A pair of oxen dawdle along the road drawing a harrow. Following them is a Byelorussian, hatless, in a long white shirt and bast shoes. Behind him again at a respectful distance are German soldiers who every now and then shout:

"Russ, schnell, schnell!"

The partisans have mined the road and the Germans have sent the peasant and his harrow on ahead to clear the way.

The oxen, as if they realized their doom, droop their heads far down and sniff the ground. At the bridge an explosion blows up one of the oxen, the harrow and the peasant. The surviving ox phlegmatically swings its tail. The Germans animatedly discuss the incident showing each other how the Byelorussian's bast shoes flew up in the air first. They pull in another peasant from the field, hitch a long tree-trunk to the ox instead of the harrow and again drive forward the living mine-finder.

A flock of sheep pass by on the way to Germany. The soldiers driving them are carrying jugs of butter and eggs wrapped in white embroidered tablecloths. Some of the Jerries wear garlands of ducks and geese and are smothered with feathers from head to foot. An officer has one arm in a sling, in his other hand he carries a headless goose.

NIGHT

A dark windy night. I watched the sentry on the bridge. First he sent up

flares and then began to shoot from fright. An incendiary bullet hit a haystack, flames immediately enveloped it. The blaze lit the field and the bridge and the sentry on his high tower. That appealed to the German and as soon as the haystack burned out he sent a burst of tracer-bullets into another and set that ablaze. And so he stood at his post amid a sea of brilliant light. At midnight, when the sentries were changed, we heard laughter and guttural German speech. The sentry going off duty was telling his relief about the illumination.

We emerged onto the road, scooped out two deep "rat holes" from either side, put in a healthy charge of TNT and an enormous artillery shell and blew up a whole stretch of road.

Meanwhile the neighbouring column had reached the railway and were now storming a station. From where we were we could see how the tracer-bullets plunged into the wooden station building, lighting up the windows with green and blue flashes. Then explosions thundered.

The ground shook and all the noises of the night merged in one unbroken racket, into the unison, the great symphony of our offensive from the front and the rear.

THE HERR DOCTOR

In a certain Byelorussian country-town lived doctor Alexei Ivanovich. He was known all over the town and in the surrounding villages because he was a good doctor and a kind man. In the morning he went on his rounds with his horse and trap and the children seeing him in the street called out: "Here comes the doctor!"

When the Germans came the doctor went to the field commandant and said that he would not leave the hospital but would work for them. The doctor became vicious like a German. He drove peasant women and their ailing children out of the hospital if they did not bring him pork and eggs. At the top of his voice he roared at them: "This isn't Soviet rule, it's German rule!" And the peasants returned home in tears and told everyone how there was German rule in the town now.

The Germans could not make enough of the Herr Doctor. They held him up as an example to engineers, artists and

teachers in the town who did not want to work for the new lords and masters. They even filmed the doctor, put him in a newsreel and showed it in Berlin under the heading: "The Byelorussian Intelligentsia Work Hand in Hand with the Germans." The local Gestapo bigwig moved into the doctor's house and in the evening brought in Germans from the commandant's headquarters to play cards. The townspeople heard the pandemonium of drunken revelry at the doctor's house and said: "The doctor's drinking with the Germans." Patriots wanted to kill him for treason to the people.

One day the doctor took a car from the commandant's headquarters for a pleasure ride. He drove out of town and didn't come back.

On the following day the chemist shop was ransacked. Together with the powders, ointments and lotions Anna, the chemist, disappeared too. Then the equipment of the operating room at the hospital vanished. The Germans placed a sentry at the hospital. But one day a waggon drove up. A man in a felt hat presented a German order bearing the Eagle stamp and took away the equipment of the dental clinic and the dentist, Anastassia Zakharovna. When the German commandant saw the signature on the order he ground his teeth with rage. It was the doctor's signature.

Soon the lathe in the saw-mill and the American press from the printshop went the same way. Only the steel safe containing gold and notes in the German headquarters stopped where it was. It was screwed to the floor and the wall. But when the headquarters paymaster went to it one day he found it empty. Instead of the gold and notes he discovered a note from the doctor. The treasurer spat into the safe from chagrin.

A partisan column under doctor Alexei Ivanovich appeared in the forest. Then all understood that to the accompaniment of the drunken shouts of the German card-players in the doctor's house, to the tune of the accordion on which the chief Gestapo agent liked to play, behind a door hidden by a cupboard, the future partisan column had been formed.

One unexpected event after another visited the town. The saw-mill burned down. A German car blew up in the centre

of the town outside the very door of the commandant's headquarters. One night the engineer from the power station disappeared and the light went out right away just as if he had taken it with him. The motors were burned clean out.

A number of the *Pravda* appeared on the town bill-board above the German announcements and attracted a crowd. The police had trouble in dispersing it. On May 1st a big red flag was seen flying over the police station. Germans, almost frothing at the mouth, clambered onto the roof, tugged at the flag and... flew into the air. The flag was a booby trap. On the anniversary of the October Revolution the red flag appeared again. The Germans prowled all round it, yelled, raged and shot at it but no one would dare to touch it. At last the Germans found a Jewish boy and drove him to the flag at the point of the bayonet. The boy calmly went up to it; the Germans took cover. Nothing happened. The flag had not been mined.

When I came to the doctor's column, Alexei Ivanovich was engaged against the Hungarians. They had come to the peasants' field with a threshing machine and a gun. The Hungarians entrenched themselves and began to thresh the grain. But just as soon as the machine started up bullets came whizzing from the forest. The Hungarians advanced towards the forest covering themselves with sheaves. When they reached the woods, though, they encountered such a fury of machine-gun and mortar fire that they dropped the sheaves and ran for dear life.

After the battle the command post was turned into an operating room. The maps were cleared off the table and it was covered with white parachute silk. The commanders left, nurses came. Only Alexei Ivanovich stopped where he was. But he was no longer a commander directing the battle but a quiet, strict surgeon in a white gown.

After an urgent and intricate operation had been performed Alexei Ivanovich and I went to the forest hospital, a dugout draped with parachute silk. As we entered there was an immediate hush, even the badly wounded ceased to groan. The doctor asked them how they felt but they replied with recollections of battle. They didn't want

to speak to the doctor about wounds but to the column commander about fighting.

The doctor greeted me like an old friend although we were meeting for the first time. He was kind by nature. He was a tall stout man with benevolent features that ill-accord with war.

"I'll show you my district," he said to me as if by the way.

At dawn we jumped into the doctor's cart and drove out onto a highway linking two towns held by German garrisons. The highway was in the partisans' hands. From the partisan post to the town the highway was overgrown with grass. At the post we turned off onto a partisan road.

The villages were alive with armed people. Bearded stalwarts, belts of machine-gun bullets crossed over their chests, stood at the gates. Women and boys of fifteen or so with rifles and grenades emerged from the cottages. In the streets children with wooden magazine rifles and knives were playing at partisans. These were partisan villages.

On catching sight of us the boys shouted: "Here comes the doctor!"

Old men sunning themselves on benches outside the cottages and discussing high strategy, rose and doffed their caps, and gave their cordial welcome of "Good health, doctor." Old soldiers saluted. "Long life, Comrade Brigadier," was their greeting. Some who remembered the doctor when he was Alyoshka, the shepherd boy, shouted: "Good day, Alexei."

A youth came to the cart and asked the doctor what he should do.

"Kill the Germans," was the doctor's reply.

While I was there a miller, covered with flour, brought a paper from the German commandant. The commandant asked for an estimate for repairing the mill. The paper bore a German signature and the Eagle stamp. The doctor wrote on it: "I am the boss of the district, not you," and sent it to the commandant. That very night a group of partisans went out with oxen and brought the mill back to the forest. A few days later I was awakened at dawn by a siren. I went into the woods towards the source of the racket. The doctor was standing beside the mill and was letting the hooter

rip himself. It was not very far from the German garrison.

"I'm letting the commandant know the mill is working."

We drove up to the fringe of a forest. A river flowed in the distance. On its further bank stood a town. I saw a German sentry on his watch-tower. He was gazing into a field of yellowing rye. At the forest edge partisan machine-guns were posted. Under their protection the local peasants gathered in the harvest.

The peasants piled the sheaths onto waggons and drove them out of the zone of fire—not an ear for the Germans.

That was Alexei Ivanovich's home town.

The Germans were bottled up in the town as in a hole. They lived in the very centre of the town, which was criss-crossed with trenches and encircled with barbed wire. Machine-guns could be seen in loop-holes in a six foot wall of logs, girders and stones.

More than two years they had lived day and night in fear of attack. A German taken prisoner by the partisans said that for the last six months the garrison had not once undressed. "We are tortured by the idea of death," he said.

Firing goes on all night in the town. The Germans fire at the shadows of the night, at bushes, at waving branches that look like arms in the mist, at the rain which seems to them like the foot-falls of the partisans.

Once the Germans heard a noise in the swamp. It grew louder. Then a machine-gun clattered. The sky was lit with flares. The alarm was given. Tommy-guns and machine-guns fired from all sides. But the noise in the swamp went on just the same. The Germans blazed away like mad until dawn. In the morning the cause of the noise was revealed. Partisan Yemelyanych's cow had got stuck in the swamp. She had strayed, wanted to extricate herself from the mud and had rolled about in the bushes. The Germans fired forty thousand rounds and did not even tickle the cow.

Telling me the story, Alexei Ivanovich added with a laugh:

"If the Germans of that garrison survive they'll never forget my town until their dying day."

When I began my journey the bright green tree tops of the Byelorussian forest sighed loudly in the breeze. Later the green gave way to yellows and reds. Then a white blanket spread over the earth and the snow crunched beneath the horses' hoofs. And still we rode and rode through Byelorussia.

On horseback, on peasant carts, on cars flying the red flag, on machine-gun chariot and partisan whippet tank—for five months we drove over the Byelorussian land.

Here they say: all roads in Byelorussia lead to the partisans. True enough, you have only to ride some ten to fifteen kilometres from a German garrison, a railway or highway to reach the partisan zone.

The time has come when in Byelorussia every tree fires at the passing German, every bush conceals a bullet, every stone on the road covers a mine.

The Byelorussian people have risen. The hoof-beats of the partisan columns are heard throughout Byelorussia from the Pripiat to the Western Dvina, from the Dnieper to the Western Bug, from Pinsk to Vitebsk and from Bobruisk to Brest.

I saw Russian tommy-guns of the latest model, black German tommy-guns, Czech light machine-guns, long Magyar sabres, Russian, Italian and British grenades. There were arms of all types and all times, countries and nations, from the modern armour-piercing rifle to culverins of the days of Tsar Alexei Mikhailovich.

I saw a partisan transport column stretching a mile. Every waggon had its accordion. Voices were raised in song audible for miles around. Every waggon had its own song: subdued Byelorussian, sobbing Tartar, lively Polish, dashing Don, smart Volga or free-flowing Siberian. Here were Byelorussians, Siberians, men of Warsaw, of Kiev and of the Don.

On the high bank of the River Oressa, open to the wind and sky was a grave. Three maples lit by the sun gleamed above it like three candles. Here was buried Fanya Kononova, a Byelorussian teacher.

In October 1941 the Germans had tortured her on this spot. She was

covered in blood. An infuriated German sergeant-major was questioning her.

"How many partisans are there in the forest?" he asked.

"As many as there are trees," replied the teacher.

"How many partisans have been your guests?"

"My mother had two tons of wheat. We made gruel of it but could feed less than half of them."

They gouged out her eyes, tied a stone round her neck and flung her into the river.

Since then men on foot and mounted, travelling the great partisan highway, halt at the grave beneath the red maples.

There is not a district in Byelorussia without its partisan column. There is not a railway in Byelorussia where German trains do not tumble down embankments. There is not a road in Byelorussia where German machines are not blown up. There is not a town in Byelorussia where the Germans live undisturbed. These years there was not a day in Byelorussia that Jerries did not

fall dead, shot, choked or stabbed by the partisan's hand. These years in Byelorussia there was not a night when the Germans slept in peace.

Day and night mines explode wherever a German appears. Their whole life is mined. Wherever they go, whatever they tread on, whatever they grasp, whatever they touch, everything blows up.

And we don't know who set the fire burning, who laid the mine or who did the killing. Perhaps we shall never know. They are unknown heroes, plain Russian people. Many of them are not on the partisan records, have neither machine-gun nor tommy-gun. All they have is a Russian heart and a little TNT.

The Germans wanted to learn from Fanya Kononova, the teacher, how many partisans there were in the woods. Just as you cannot count the trees in the forest, the stars in the sky, the grains of sand on the river bottom, so the Germans cannot count the partisans of Byelorussia.

BORIS YAMPOLSKY

THE BULBA. A FIERY BYELORUSSIAN DANCE, AS PERFORMED BY ADOLF HITLER



Drawing by Boris Yefimov

VLADIMIR KOROLENKO



Korolenko's first story was published in 1879. Fame came in the mid-eighties when four of his stories—*Makar's Dream* and *The Man from Sakhalin*, *The Blind Musician* and *The Murmuring Forest*—all appeared in the same year. His success was complete, the kind that stands out as a landmark in the history of world literature. These first efforts brought the Russian reader face to face with an author who was no longer in the initial stage of his development, still groping in the dark for his own, individual motifs and forms. Korolenko being already a mature artist became one of Russia's favourite authors. He brought to the literature of his day new characters, new themes and new ideas and in his books the reader found what contemporary Russian fiction had hitherto lacked and what no one prior to Korolenko had stated with such force and clarity.

Korolenko's success, however, cannot be explained simply by his great and original talent. The short stories, which brought him wide renown, were the

result of the experience gained by the author in the first thirty-two years of his eventful life.

Vladimir Galaktionovich Korolenko was born in 1853 in the city of Zhitomir. It was here and in the neighbouring town of Rovno that he spent his childhood and youth, the first eighteen years of his life. It was here that Korolenko learned to love the Ukraine with a devotion that was never to leave him and which can be felt in all his writings.

At twenty Korolenko had every right to call himself "an intellectual proletarian". He was admitted to the St. Petersburg Institute of Technology, but financial difficulties interfered with the continuation of his studies. He took to draughtsmanship and proof-reading and after several years of hard toil was able to resume his studies at another institution, the Petrovsky Agricultural and Forestry Academy in Moscow. Here Korolenko mingled with the revolutionarily minded youth of his day, wanted to become a propagandist of progress and, to be closer to the people, studied shoemaking. He was, as a matter of fact, listed in the police dossier as "state criminal Korolenko", "shoemaker and painter". Korolenko had, of course, committed no crime. He belonged to no underground organization and had not participated in any conspiracies. All he had done was to defend those whom he considered mistreated and those he defended with unwavering courage and dignity. His defence of an illegally arrested student resulted in his own arrest and while in exile he openly rebelled against the local police whose treatment of the other exiles was unfair in the extreme. Many years later, when he was already a famous writer, Korolenko's defence of peasants, accused by the police of a religious massacre, was just as courageous and he succeeded in winning their acquittance.

Gorky said of Korolenko that his was "the hard life of a hero". He was exiled

by the tsarist government three times and when at the age of twenty-eight, in 1881, Korolenko found himself banished to the village of Amga in the remote Yakutsk region, he already had behind him the privations of the Vyshnevolotsky prison, imprisonment in the Tobolsk hard labour camp and exile to the Vyatka and Perm provinces. His *Siberian Tales*, published in many leading Russian journals immediately after the author's return from Siberia, prove that Vladimir Korolenko did not forsake his convictions during the trying years of exile. These stories, and more especially the famous *Makar's Dream*, full of revolutionary protest against social injustice, laid the cornerstone of Korolenko's widespread popularity.

These were stories of Siberian peasants, of the drivers of the distant Lena River¹, of the settlers from Russia and the Ukraine and the vagabonds who roamed the woods. All of them had a hard life full of privations. But no power on earth could destroy their desire of happiness, that all-enveloping passion which makes man beautiful and lifts him above an ugly reality. Korolenko writes of this "beauty of man", of people imbued by a longing for better and happier days. Of the Siberian peasant "poor Makar" Korolenko wrote:

"His work was back-breaking, he lived in poverty, suffered hunger and cold. Had he any thoughts besides ceaseless worry about bread and tea?

"Yes, he had."

The driver in the story *The Slayer* is under the influence of a horrible delusion. "Sin!" this ignorant man is told, "then you will know the sweetness of repentance." But to taste the sweetness of repentance he must murder women and children. Yet at the decisive moment the human instinct forces him to resist evil.

In these stories Korolenko followed the theme of struggle against evil which he had chosen as the leit-motif of his life's work.

In 1885 Korolenko was granted permission to live in Nizhny-Novgorod where he continued his work of depicting the brave and beautiful man. *Murmuring Forest*, one of Korolenko's

finest stories based on the theme of struggle for liberty and social independence, reads like a grim legend of the past. The struggle of a subtle people for its liberation is dealt with in *The Lay of Flore, Agrippe and Menahem the Son of Yeguda*. Here, in brief, is the story: an enslaved people who have bowed their heads under the yoke of the enslaver, bending unprotestingly to the tyrant. But this subjugation brought them evil and "through the air from border to border, was heard the moan of the suppressed". The leader of this people, Menahem, came forward, calling his country-men to struggle. Menahem loved his people and hated their enemies. "His love was like a flame," writes Korolenko, "and his hatred was like the wind. For as the detested yoke became more burdensome Menahem surrendered his heart to his people, a heart burning with love."

Through this description of a free man Korolenko audaciously voices the call to struggle and points out the only road to victory.

In his writings on historical subjects and his description of the heroic past of the Russian people Korolenko attaches much significance to the national struggle for independence. In an article *War, the Motherland and Humanity*, he wrote: "War is difficult, hard and terrible. . . But once we realize its tragic inevitability, we Russians know how to die and win in the defence of our homeland."

When in 1918 Gorky wrote about Korolenko that "that great and splendid writer told me much about the Russian people which I had not heard from anyone else", he had in mind Korolenko's ability to depict the courage, insurmountable will to victory, spiritual purity and innate talents of the Russian. It is well-known that Gorky attributed particular significance to Korolenko's *The River Plays*, a story about the ferryman Tyulin on the river Vetluga. In Tyulin Gorky saw a symbol of the Russian peasant's ability to accomplish great deeds and bend everything to his own will at the required moment. This, indeed, is the basic idea of the story. The apathy of a spiritually suppressed person which seems to envelop Tyulin in the first part of the story is only his external state, for Tyulin's vitality

¹ In nine-months Siberian winter the frozen Lena River is used as highway.—Ed.

cannot be destroyed. He sees in the storm in which he is caught a call to action and in that moment of danger the passive and "spiritually suppressed" Tyulin gives way to a new Tyulin, a man prepared to prove his mettle and capable of performing great deeds.

Korolenko's talent was a peculiar one. He masterfully combined the qualities of a historian writing of "what really happened", of an essayist and a newspaper-man with the art of a poet, a master of the short story, and an outstanding memoirist. His famous *Sketches of Pavlovo*, an industrial town, of which Lenin made a careful study, his articles *On the Multan Affair* in which Korolenko defended the Votyak peasants accused of religious massacres; his articles on the anti-semitic Beilis trial which played no small part in bringing to light the instigators of this Black-Hundred frame ups and countless other articles and sketches, have placed Korolenko among Russia's first-class publicists. His *House No. 13*, an article on the Jewish pogrom in Kishinyov, was unanimously acclaimed a most outstanding piece of progressive journalism. Of Korolenko's *Everyday Event*, which brought to light many facts about the police rule in 1906—1909 period of reaction, Leo Tolstoy said: "It should be printed and circulated in millions of copies. No Duma speeches, no treatise, no drama or novel will ever have even a small fraction of the effect which this article is bound to have."

Korolenko's excellent knowledge of life and democratic tendencies are revealed also in those writings where he introduces the "magic theme". He fills the world of fantasy with true-to-life people, places them in situations which could have actually happened, but life in this world takes on a sudden beauty because of his introduction of some magic power which justly solves the most complex social conflicts. This was the case in *Makar's Dream* where Toyon (the Master) weighing the pros and cons of hostility between the peasants and their landowners, re-established justice on earth by taking sides with poor Makar. This was the case, too, in the fairy-tale *Iom-Ki-Pur* where the devil Hapun forces the miller to understand that he has been unjust and cruel to his workers.

But that is possible only in a fairy-tale. The real world is described by Korolenko through its contradictions so masterfully depicted in the complicated spiritual changes through which his heroes pass. In the novel *The Blind Musician* Korolenko was able to penetrate into the "dark world" of his hero, showing the spiritual drama of a blind man who in the end overcomes his personal sufferings and through great and inspired art is able to understand and "see" the world around him.

This gift of expression and tenderness has been achieved only by first-class artists, and we find it in Korolenko's description of the great "Slav soul" of a Russian peasant who lands in America. The story is called *In a Strange Land*. Several generations of Russians have read of the adventures of this man in a strange city, of a man "without a tongue" who was able in such conditions to preserve his individuality, so highly appraised in the end by the best people of that "strange world".

Korolenko's name is closely connected with the names of two of his famous contemporaries—Chekhov and Gorky. Chekhov was the first leading writer of the eighties to recognize Korolenko's rare talent. In his turn Korolenko was Gorky's first literary tutor. In later years Gorky wrote: "I entered the world of literature with his assistance."

The close bounds that united the three writers account for the heartfelt words written by Korolenko and Gorky on the occasion of Chekhov's premature death, also for Gorky's beautiful and very true-to-life portrait of Korolenko in his memoirs. The three writers are connected by their unity of principles, the asceticism they displayed in their works and the care they took over style. Gorky described Korolenko as a "great humanist", as a man with an unquenchable thirst for "truth and justice". To his last days Gorky retained the highest opinion of Korolenko, pointing out time and again in his letters to beginners that Korolenko was his teacher.

Like Chekhov and Gorky, Korolenko was a masterhand at the sketch, the short story and the novellette. Using extensive material and covering a wide range of events he always stays within the limits of graceful and poetic composition. In his writings Korolenko continued the

traditions of Pushkin, Lermontov and Turgenev, giving true examples of the Russian language that stems from the people.

Korolenko's long career in literature found consummation in the many-volumed *The History of My Contemporary*—his literary memoirs, which he completed in the last years of his life (1918—1921).

In accordance with his plan—to tell his own story and the story of his times “curbing my mischievous imagination”, this book repeated the episodes of many earlier works, presenting them, however, from a new literary angle. Any reader who is interested in Russia's life in 1860—1890 should not fail to read this book which furnishes a clear-cut picture of the Russian intelligentsia during one of the most important periods of its history. Korolenko devoted many pages to descriptions of the children's world and in this field has also set new and higher standard.

Korolenko's story *My First Acquaint-*

ance with Dickens, published in this issue, gives some idea of the author's treatment of biographical material. It was in this sphere that many features of Korolenko's writings came to the surface: his lyricism, his ability to use facts, his own original humour and his love for describing nature. This story is included in the Korolenko collection *Sketches and Stories*, published recently by the State Literary Publishing House in Moscow. The volume also contains *Makar's Dream*, *Murmuring Forest*, *In a Strange Land*, *The River Plays* and several other stories.

Korolenko died in 1921, in Poltava, where, until recently, a museum containing mementoes of his life and work as well as a wealth of literary material was maintained. Along with many other cultural treasures, the German invaders destroyed the Korolenko Museum, desecrating the memory of one of Russia's most beloved writers.

ANATOLI KOTOV

OF MEN AND THE SEA

The war has brought a noticeable increase in the number of books about the navy and the sea. It is a long path from the first day of the 250-days defence of Sevastopol in 1941—1942 to the liberation of the Crimea and the further offensive, and naturally Soviet writers have not yet been able to record all the events of this period.

The works of Soviet writers, however, contain many episodes from this historic struggle—the battle deeds of the sailors and the story of how fighters are made. Suffice it to mention Leonid Sobolev's *Sailor-Soul*, a collection of short stories already known to our readers, which has now appeared in a second edition.

The purpose of this brief review is to acquaint readers with some recent books devoted to the Soviet navy.

Leonid Sobolev has written a new book of naval sketches, a sequel to his *Sailor-Soul*. Soviet seamen are shown during a new phase of the war when the fleet is engaged in offensive operations. Some of the sketches describe the battle of Odessa, the liberating of the Crimea and Sevastopol. Sobolev was with the marin-

ers when they stormed Sevastopol and is able to describe what he saw at the firing line and on the warships.

With his usual fine accuracy and in his vivid style Sobolev depicts officers and naval rating whose job is constantly to seek out the enemy and destroy him. The years of war have been years of hard schooling for them, their offensive spirit has gained in determination and lost nothing in tempestuousness. Many of the seamen who took part in the defence of Sevastopol in 1941—1942 returned to liberate the city as officers.

Roads of Victory—that is the title of Sobolev's book—gives the reader a picture of the liberation of Odessa and Sevastopol. The author tells us in the words of Odessa people what they experienced during thirty months of German domination and describes the gloomy evidence of Rumanian rule in Odessa—ruined buildings, looted schools and other centres of culture and organized massacre of the people.

Much could be written about how Odessa's population welcomed the Red Army and Navy but one phrase from Sobolev's story is sufficient to evoke the atmosphere of those days.

"We dashed into Odessa," said one of the sailors, a scout, "all covered with dust, but we were clean as new pins when we reached the centre, the kisses had washed us. . ."

Sevastopol. The scene of battles hardly over. The ruins of colossal German fortifications. Heaps of stone and metal which seem to symbolize the soulless German war machine meet one's eye. But these are ruins imbued with life—a monument to the town's immortal glory.

"In the noble silence that surrounds the gallant death of fighting men," writes Sobolev, "the great city of the Black Sea Fleet lay spread out before me, ruined by the Germans but indomitable."

". . . The mighty triumphant silence of history hangs over the ruins, history begun by my ancestors and carried on by my contemporaries. The breath of centuries floats over the city carrying into the future Sevastopol's double glory, the glory of two sieges.

"In the reflection of this glory I suddenly felt my own immortality. It lay on my breast, a round bronze disc on a blue ribbon. I was alone on the hill. I took my badge of immortality from my tunic and kissed it—the Sevastopol Defence Medal through which the country had made part of the undying glory of the immortal city mine.

"Never before had I felt so strongly the pleasure and pride of belonging to a great people, of living in a great epoch and of being the witness of great deeds. I realized this with uncommon clarity that day on a high hill above ruined Sevastopol, in the hour of the city's liberation, the day of its return to life.

"It is worth living for just one such moment as this.

"The moment of victory is sweet, forward to victory, friends! Everything for victory, all your strength, thoughts and feelings!"

Eugene Yunga's new novel *Son of Sevastopol* is the story of the training of a sailor and the formation of his character.

The author is a merchant seaman, a ship's pilot, who has visited the ports of Europe, the tropics, Japan and South America; he has been to the Malay Peninsula and the African coast towns; he has sailed with arctic expeditions, took part in the rescue of the "Chelyuskin"

party, the voyage of the ice-breaker "Litke" from Vladivostok to Murmansk in 1934 and the Lena-Kolyma arctic expedition. Yunga began to write while still an apprentice at sea, hence his nom de plume (yunga—cabin boy). He has written many sea stories, some of the best being: *All Latitudes*, *Strange Latitudes*, *On Board* and *The End of Olya Path*. As is often the case with sailor-writers Yunga's knowledge of life at sea is interwoven with romantic enthusiasm. Sometimes this enthusiasm leads to a surfeit of rapture and a too flowery language. Yunga's best stories, however, captivate the reader with their sincerity and directness.

Son of Sevastopol is a novel in three parts the first two of which, *Birthday* and *The Road to Life*, have already been published in the magazine *Krasnoflotets*; the third part, *Sea Font*, has just been completed. The prototype of the hero is a real person, Volodya Shchukin, a Sevastopol lad, whose adventures and deeds in the navy form the basis of the novel. The author has, on several occasions, visited the Black Sea Fleet since the war began and the impressions he gained enabled him to draw vivid pictures of sailors at war.

The whole action of the first part takes place during one day in beleaguered Sevastopol. Kiryusha Prikhodko, engineer of a fishing vessel, is celebrating his fifteenth birthday. A naval officer presented the boy with a copy of De Coster's *Thyl Uylenspiegel*, with these words on the flyleaf: "May the ashes of Sevastopol burn in your heart as long as you fight for your present, as long as you live and think." In one day in that town so savagely bombed by the Germans the young engineer went through a school of suffering and courage. His motor fishing-boat was sunk before his eyes during the bombing of the Minnaya Bay. Kiryusha looked everywhere for his mother; he wanted to say good-bye to her before leaving Sevastopol with the sailors. The author paints a magnificent picture of ruined but resisting Sevastopol. Taking cover wherever he could Kiryusha made his way through the bomb-riddled streets. He sheltered in the dugout of an A.A. battery and in the catacombs under Sevastopol. . . There were whole factories in these underground premises

where the men and women continued their work, turning out grenades, bombs and cartridges for the front; there were offices down there, dining-rooms, even schools and a cinema. The young sailor took shelter in the old Vladimir Cathedral where the remains of the great Russian Admiral Nakhimov rest. The crowded day filled with ever new impressions ends with the young engineer's baptism of fire. He helped save the sailors who were withdrawing from a jetty in the North Bay. Kiryusha was wounded by a shell splinter in the fighting and left his native town. So ends his birthday.

The Road of Life covers the period of the fighting against the Germans in the Caucasian foothills. These were difficult days and the author succeeds in presenting that feeling of stern determination which imbued the sailors.

Yunga's seascapes are painted with a generous brush. This is particularly true of his description of the hurricane, at Tsemess Bay and Novorossiisk. The force of the "bora"—as hurricanes are called here—which usually lasts several days and not only paralyzes life in the harbours but also in the towns, is a matter of amazement even to experienced seamen who have sailed the seven seas.

In this "satanic weather" Kiryusha takes a motor fishing-boat out to sea and carries a sailor scout to the enemy's rear. In a rickety old craft the sailors fought the stormy, raging sea. The boat was wrecked when they tried to land but the scout, three sailors and the engineer Kiryusha manage to get ashore on the German-held coast. The scout, who was to make his way to a point far behind the German lines, suggested that Kiryusha accompany him to Sevastopol. Kiryusha refused. Duty called and he rejoined his ship by crossing the high Markhota mountains which divided the two fronts. In the course of these trials Kiryusha hardened and gained experience of war.

In part 3 we find Kiryusha taking part in the landing at Myskhako, known as the "Little Land", a point behind the German lines. Novorossiisk was now in enemy hands and a detachment of marines under Major Kunikov spent several months on this spot of land despite the fierce German counter-attacks,

and here they prepared a beach-head for the attack on Novorossiisk from the rear. The novel ends with a meeting between the author and his hero in Batumi from which town Kiryusha Prikhodko is to put out next day in a fishing-boat for Novorossiisk to take part in the storming of the city.

The novel, therefore, covers a whole phase in the battle history of the Black Sea Fleet from the defence of Sevastopol and the fighting in the Caucasus to the battle for Novorossiisk; the latter was a turning point in the war for the Black Sea Fleet, the beginning of the fleet's offensive operations.

The new period in the war is the subject of a novel on which Yunga is now working. Its hero is also a real personage who appears under his own name, Hero of the Soviet Union, Captain Nikolai Sipyagin, commander of a motor-boat flotilla, the first to land troops at Novorossiisk.

Among the many books describing sailors in action one which attracts considerable attention is a little booklet entitled *Notes of a Submarine Sailor* by an officer, Hero of the Soviet Union, Captain Israel Fissanovich, Commander of Submarine M-172. He was born in 1914 and his naval training began in the early days of the present war. At the time when Soviet sailors and submarine craft were already in action against enemy convoys in the Barents sea young Lieutenant-Commander Fissanovich was undergoing practical training in a bay. His commander and teacher was Hero of the Soviet Union Ivan Kolyskin, the famous "uncle" of the Northern Fleet. Fissanovich went on his first war-time voyage with Kolyskin and displayed the makings of a master undersea fighter. Under Fissanovich's command submarine M-172 sunk thirteen enemy vessels in twenty-one months and was awarded the Order of the Red Banner. The commander's name soon became known both in the Soviet Union and in allied countries.

His book is noteworthy for its simplicity and its restraint; it is devoid of tawdry tinsel and empty words which frequently spoil sketches of professional journalists.

The author describes submarine warfare first and foremost as hard work.

It is the daily training that makes for perfection and success in battle.

The submarine's history and Fisanovich's book begin while the vessel is still on the stocks. While the submarine is still under construction the crew study her from blueprints and the commanders of the various compartments crawl about the vessel on the heels of welders and coppersmiths following every bend in her hull. Though the engines are still being installed, the future engineers, helmsmen and mechanics get to know every nut and bolt. During this "embryonic stage" of the submarine its officers and ratings studied it in detail. It was during this time that the intricate piece of mechanism which constitutes a modern submarine and the people who were to run it became one indivisible whole.

At last, after practice runs and tests had been completed, the vessel put to sea one August evening. The young commander set out on his first search for the enemy but the sea was deserted. In a quiet harbour deep in a fiord enemy vessels were being unloaded. The commander decided to enter the fiord but Kolyshkin, an old experienced hand, warned him against it. He was not sure whether the decision had been made after due thought or whether it was the perfectly natural rashness of a youngster. Only after cruising for a whole day along enemy shores and having convinced himself that the young commander's plan was well founded, did Kolyshkin give him permission to enter the fiord. The grim determination of the crew as they entered enemy waters is one of the best stories in the book:

"There was a silence in the vessel which was unusual even when under water. Everybody was silent for he knew that the vessel was moving farther and farther into the heart of the fiord. The gloomy, hostile banks drew nearer and nearer: still closer came the menacing unknown. . .

"Nobody smiled in those moments of extreme tenseness. This was the first battle in every man's life. We were going right into the enemy's lair. Side by side with fighting enthusiasm, somewhere, down in the corner of our hearts, there was an element of alarm.

"We have passed the entrance," said

"I raised the periscope. A few cable-lengths ahead a patrol motor-boat was entering the fiord. Her stern gun had an evil glint, a pennant was flying at the mast-head. The submarine followed her down the centre of the narrow corridor squeezed between overhanging granite cliffs.

"We were going well. The periscope was lowered. The only sign that implacable death was moving towards the enemy harbour in the depths of the calm untroubled waters of the fiord disappeared from the surface.

"Shumikhin at the listening post picked up different sounds from the mysterious green gloom around us. His gaunt figure was motionless. The eyes beneath his thick black brows were closed. It seemed as though the man was asleep. Only his hand moved, slowly turning the wheel of the instrument. The sailor's ears were the only part of his body that were fully alive at that time. He was carried away into a world of sounds unusual for the human ear. The depths of the sea are filled with faint flutterings, half-sighs, half-tones that merge into an indistinct, mysterious, pulsating melody. On the background of this melody of sea noises the sound of ship's screws could be heard. It was the patrol boat that we saw through the periscope. So far the sound had kept at one level, now it was growing stronger. Surely they had not seen us!

"I ordered the vessel to proceed more quietly. Almost silently the submarine came on to meet the enemy. Long weary minutes dragged by. The motor-boat was coming towards us unhurriedly. It was already quite near. Now it was above us. In the compartments we could easily hear the lazy thrum of its screws. The seconds dragged on slowly. . ."

The submarine succeeded in slipping through unnoticed. Right in the harbour they torpedoed a vessel standing at the jetty and then got away in time.

One after another the submarine's voyages pass before the reader, in description as in real life each having its own specific features: from each of them we learn of the new phases of life in submarine warfare and of the new qualities of the M-172's crew. We see what the submarine crew has

gained in experience from each voyage.

The author possesses the gift of observation. His portraits of people, their outward and inner characteristics and his true descriptions of the Arctic are picturesque and memorable.

Notes of a Submarine Sailor is written

in pleasantly accurate and expressive language. This little book is a record of the achievements of seamen and at the same time gives the reader a general picture of the men themselves.

ALEXANDER MAKAROV

AN ANCIENT AND REVIVED ART

During his stay in Kazakhstan, the Hungarian anti-fascist writer Bela Balazs was engaged in studying Kazakh folklore and making various translations. The following article is not only based on observation, but also is the result of a creative intimate study of the ancient and newly flourishing art of the Kazakh people.—Ed.

It has been frequently stated that the might of the Soviet Union, displayed during the present world war in so many different ways, was for many an unexpected "riddle". Apart from everything else, the solution to this riddle should be sought, it seems to me, in the spiritual qualities of the nationalities making up the Soviet Union and the culture they have created, particularly in fiction.

In speaking of Soviet literature we have in mind more than Russian literature. It goes without saying that the latter, with its world-famous classics, is in advance of the rest. Nevertheless, Soviet literature consists of the literature of the manifold nationalities in their own languages which are still insufficiently recognized abroad as organic links in the united and single chain of Soviet culture.

The peculiarity of literature in the U.S.S.R. consists precisely in the fact that it is not a mechanical combination of the various national literatures. All literatures—Ukrainian, Byelorussian, Georgian, Armenian, Kazakh, Turkmenian, Uzbek, etc., while being national literatures are at the same time fundamentally Soviet, which accounts for the strength and harmonic richness of this choir, in which each individual voice nevertheless preserves its own national charm.

Many of these nationalities acquired a written language only under Soviet power. Most of them have founded their own publishing houses, newspapers and theatres since the revolution. Under the yoke of tsarist imperialism, many nationalities had scant knowledge even of their own history. In the new conditions of the Soviet multinational state the peoples have become aware of their individuality, history and culture. For during this period not only was the new contemporary literature of the various nationalities developed. The centuries-old, almost forgotten national poetry of the Central-Asiatic peoples began to develop in Soviet times in the same sense as one speaks of the "development" of a photographic negative.

Soviet culture did more than re-discover and revive ancient folk poetry: it also adapted it to modern life. The ancient and almost buried traditions of the Central-Asiatic people's bards were revived on the initiative and by the encouragement of the Soviet Government

as a vital and evolutionary phenomenon of our times. Once again wandering minstrels with Soviet passports in their pockets and ancient dombra in hand, sing to their people.

When in the twenties the publishing of the Kazakh national epic poem *Kyz Zhibek* was undertaken for the first time, an original editing of the text was adopted. This poem was read to the old Kazakhs of the steppes. Village inhabitants had often heard this epic song by their "akyns" (bards), those talented performers of the steppe, and had memorized the text so well that they could suggest corrections and additions.

The few present day Kazakh minstrels have become highly honoured members of the Union of Soviet Writers. Now they sing not only the wonderful legend of Batyr Koblandy and the sad, tender poem of Kozy Korpesh: they sing also a ballad about the twenty-eight Red Army men of the Eighth Guards Division who at Moscow held up fifty German tanks. And the wonderful old bard Jamboul composed the beautiful song *Leningraders, Children of Mine*, and this song of the ninety-five-year-old Kazakh national poet was pasted on the blackened walls of the blockaded city's fire-ravaged homes during its most difficult days.

The song of the twenty-eight guardsmen and the song dedicated to the Leningraders, are new compositions but the splendid art of the akyns who sing them is an ancient one revived as Soviet art.

Formerly the akyns travelled on horseback from village to village, from the nomad's tent of one wealthy bai (rich landowner) to another. Now they do the rounds of the collective farms or go from one industrial plant to the next by motor-car. But, as many centuries ago, they play on the two-stringed dombra and sing with the same intonation accepted so many years previously and the Kazakh people surround and listen to them with the same enthusiasm they then displayed. The ancient traditions of the peoples have been newly revived as an accepted feature in Soviet society and as a modern development. For such are the dialectics of revolutionary progress.

This is one of the solutions to the "riddle" why the Soviet Union is invincible. For the strength of the Soviet Union springs, among other things, from the free national develop-

ment of the peoples, fraternally united in the socialist union of states.

II

The whole world is now acquainted with the Red Army soldiers. But the world has still to learn of the manifold nationalities which have contributed to the moulding of this soldier and made him an invincible force. Together with the glory of the Eighth Guards Division, that of the Central-Asiatic people, the Kazakhs, has also spread far and wide. (The Kazakhs are not to be confused with the Cossacks living in the European section of the Soviet Union.) Just what kind of folk are these inhabitants of Kazakhstan where the Eighth Division was formed? Many people would like to comprehend their feelings and outlook and for this reason are interested in their poetry.

It is an established fact that to the present day there exists, to put it mildly, the naive conviction that the nationalities of Central Asia are primitive half-savage tribes. Many are inclined to ascribe even their military valour to this same "savagery". Quite likely, even those people who have already heard of the tremendous and speedy development of Central Asia in the Soviet epoch would not believe their eyes were they to visit the splendid capital of Kazakhstan, Alma-Ata, a modern garden city with its electrified large-scale industry, its universities, scientific research institutions, hospitals, libraries, publishing houses, newspapers, theatres, museums and philharmonic society.

In Kazakhstan one of the largest steppes still bears the name "Hungry Steppe". But, thanks to the development of agriculture during the last fifteen years, this "Hungry Steppe" has become one of the most fertile granaries of the Soviet Union. Kazakhstan has new industrial works as large as America's gigantic enterprises. The very youthful Kazakh theatre and the new orchestral and opera music do not lag behind the fantastic and sweeping economic development.

Eastern legends frequently tell of a hero who, in one night, had to build a magnificent castle. A similar "miracle" has and is still being achieved by the Soviet system in Asia.

Development here has proceeded at such a pace that the old has had no time to expire and having been caught up and swept along by the new, is accommodating itself to present day methods. The Kazakh peasantry listens to its *Ilyad* from the lips of its "Homers" under the shadows of their new combines.

A forty-year-old scientific worker of the Kazakh Academy, a highly qualified philologist and literary scholar, as a girl of seventeen still led a nomad's life together with her parents in a covered waggon on wheels. Now she is an associate professor and holds the chair of Kazakh folklore. Kazakh epic poems are for her more than literary monuments. They are the living songs of her youth. Kanysh Satpayev, the President of the Kazakh branch of the Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R., a world-famous geologist learned to know the layers of his country's soil not only as a scientific research worker, but long before in the days of his youth when he wandered over the steppes with his kinsfolk. This man who has

discovered colossal wealth in the bowels of his own country, says: "I was helped by my youthful experiences and recollections."

III

The most remarkable thing about the images and strength of the old Kazakh epic poems is, if one may so express it, the "modernity" of their form and language. In legends which can be traced back to ancient and even prehistoric times, one finds images of such versatile and delicate psychological analysis that they remind one of the finest novels of modern days. These poems have nothing in common with the grossness of monumental primitive art, for this epic poetry, although old, is by no means primitive. The folk art, in spite of its naivety, has nothing rough and uncouth about its style. Polished up in masterly fashion, this poetry of the grand heroic mould in no way resembles rough, unhewn rock. It is delicately chiselled and replete with individuality.

Handed down from generation to generation, these ancient poems obviously changed their linguistic shell gradually and became modernized. The highly developed Central-Asiatic literature of the XVIII and XIX centuries, which attained great popularity, could not fail to influence the ancient folksongs first put on paper in the XIX century.

Kazakh epics contain much mythology. Yet despite the winged horses and talking animals, despite even the talking weapons, the resurrected dead and the haloed head of the hero, the epics are on the whole realistic, a fact which helps to bring them into the realms of contemporary life. Naturally, the Kazakh akyn does not confine himself to the bounds of the credible when describing the strength of his hero who fights one against thousands for thirteen days and nights on end. Unaided he attacks and destroys cities, and so on. Nevertheless, such happenings are nearly always the exaggeration of actual events, hyperboles, or in other words, poetic devices to deepen impressions and make them more convincing. Of course, when describing the body of Edigue's mother, the fairy, as being so transparent that all her internal organs were visible, this is more than just an ordinary metaphor, it is an ancient mythological theme. But when in acclaiming the beauty of Kyz Zhizbek it is said that her fragile throat exposed every drop she swallowed, this is a metaphor similar to the one used by Friedrich Hebbel when describing the beauty of Agnes Bernauer: "When she drank red wine it could be seen through the skin, glistening in her throat."

It is precisely this picturesque richness and at the same time psychological realism that is reminiscent of the finest examples of the new poetry. As the knight-errant Koblandy dashes along on his splendid horse Tai Buvil and the mountains crumble under its heels so that in pity for them he leaps over the mountain peaks from valley to valley, while

*A stork sits in the reeds
Quick-winged and sharp-eared.
She is too late to fly away*

*Such lightning speed has Buvil:
He crushes the birds by the hundreds
For the jackals' supper.*

Thus, even the incredible takes on convincing smoothness because it is described with realistic and detailed true-to-life imagery. This accounts for the unprecedented vividness of the fantastic pictures very characteristic of Kazakh folk poetry.

Tearfully parting with their fatherland the Bayan's sisters set out to overtake their tribe which has already gone on its way:

*They had not the time to linger,
Their kinsmen were waiting for them,
But when they wished to lift their feet
'Twas more than they could do,
For their feet clung
To the earth which their tears
Had turned to a mass of clay.*

When Bayan Slu visited the shepherd Korpesh at night, she

*Softly crept up to his bedside,
And saw with surprise that a soft light
Illumined the grass about his head.
The cattle around gazed on in amazement
Standing in the dewy grass of the cool morning.*

Reading this one is reminded of the pious naive pictures of the early Renaissance period where cows and lambs look on in surprise at the glowing, splendid halo illuminating the head of the sleeping child Jesus.

This concreteness of poetic expression in Kazakh poetry is not always attained unconsciously. It is often the result of the ancient and conscious development of linguistic culture. As far back as in the eighties of the last century the linguist, Professor Vassili Radlov had remarked in the preface to his notes on several Kazakh-Kirghiz epic poems that the Kazakhs, "as far as eloquence is concerned, stand out among their Turkish fellow tribesmen. They have excellent command of language and are able to combine pungency and clearness of expression with a certain refinement. In addition even in their everyday language a definite rhythm can be sensed. In their construction of phrases there is a rhythmic sequence creating an impression of poetry. The Kazakh speech denotes a love of language; by a carefully constructed and considered phraseology, he aims at creating an impression on his listeners. It is also noticeable that the listeners enjoy and appreciate well-constructed speech. It is not surprising, therefore, that for people who delight so much in the beauty of words, the writing of poetry is the greatest of arts."

These remarks made by a scientist over sixty years ago prove beyond doubt that in Kazakh poetry the form of expression is not of the naively-unconscious kind but an intelligent and studied art. Skill of a high order can also be seen in their passion for metaphors and images whose use demands special talent. In Kazakh folklore one frequently comes upon the following theme: in answer to a boy passionately in love with her, a girl sends objects whose meaning he must guess. This symbolic play on words and phrases is a sign of high cultural development.

The Kazakh akyns set themselves difficult

tasks to display their art. In one epic poem, the warrior hero Koshak asks the khan's daughter, Ak Junus, to remove her clothes so that he can see her beauty and so decide whether to make her his wife. But the proud and wise Ak Junus answers him:

*Whether you like me or not
I will not show you my body or my face:
I will tell you of them
And thus you will learn of my beauty.*

And she begins to describe her own beauty. Or consider, for example, the story of how Tulegen searches for the beautiful Kyz Zhizbek whom he has never seen. Burning with impatience he spurs on his horse and overtakes six caravans. Six times he mistakes another for Kyz Zhizbek, for every time the girl riding ahead is lovelier than the last and each time the leader of the caravans Karzhiga says:

*Look at the girl, laugh and say:
No. That is not Kyz Zhizbek.*

One after another the six beauties are described. The first one charms Tulegen. But every following one outshines her predecessor. And the varying descriptions of the poet succeeding each other undeniably convince one of this.

What a miracle of development! Presented in the form of action, it is expressed in the alternating hopes and disappointments of the hero in his searchings. What a splendid run-up, each step adding to the high pedestal on which the poet places his heroine!

Lessing once drew attention to the artistic master touch in the way Homer describes Achilles' shield not when it is ready but gives the reader a concrete picture of it as it emerges from under the hammer of the magnificent blacksmith. One realizes that the Kazakh akyns who sang the heroic poem about Koblandy knew neither Lessing nor Homer. Yet when they sing of the Kipchak troops they do not describe them: they relate the mad dash of Koblandy who, overtaking the troops, inquires of the rearguard who is leading them, how great are their forces and asks who is riding ahead. To get accurate information he rides all the way along to the vanguard continuing to ask questions. In this way he passes the whole army, learns, sees and observes for himself its strength and compilation.

The composition of these epic poems is also very skilful. Er Targyn is one of the best perfected variations of the Oedipus inasmuch as the catastrophe sung about is invoked and brought on by the very fear of it and precisely by the attempts to stave it off which hasten the tragic end. The account of this catastrophe is repeated word for word three times. At first it is predicted by the old akyn, later it is invoked by Targyn as a threat and the third time the catastrophe itself is described.

Repetition is a familiar and frequent practice in ancient folklore. But in the heroic song about the knight-errant, Targyn, repetition is put to special use. The prediction of the akyn becomes no longer the subjective vision of a prophet, since the hero, knowing nothing about it, repeats it word for word. It acquires, independently of certain individuals, an objective character. It is

as if this unavoidable fate were recorded in some judgement book and read by those two alone. And this is why this still to be, but at the same time apparently already existing event makes such a grim impression.

Touching and heart-rending are Koblandy's parting with his parents where the mighty knight is for his mother still a "child" and a "lamb"; his grim passion when parting with his sister and wife; the expectation and happiness of his old mother. All this can

rightly be included among the treasures of world lyrics.

The heroes of the Kazakh epics are described with exceptional objectivity and realism and with all their many shortcomings.

Despite their legendary greatness they remain for us human beings. It is precisely this humaneness which gives the national art of the Kazakh steppes not only cultural and historical significance but great artistic value.

BELA BALAZS

NEW BOOKS

Motherland—a collection of the writings of Russia's most outstanding men of letters on their motherland, on the growth of the Russian state and on Russian warriors and military leaders was recently issued in Moscow by the State Literary Publishing House.

In vivid excerpts from literary works beginning with the XII century right through to our times, from that splendid Russian epic poem *The Lay of Igor's March* to the poems of Vladimir Mayakovsky, poet of the Soviet epoch, the collection presents a review of the features characteristic of Russian patriotism.

The glory of Russian arms speaks through the immortal works of the XVIII century poet, philosopher, and scholar Lomonosov, the tragedian Sumarokov, the well-known ode-writer Derzhavin, Karamzin, the author of *The History of the Russian State*, the romanticist Zhukovsky, the lyricist Batyushkov and the poet-partisan of 1812, Denis Davydov. The poet Ryleyev who himself took part in the uprising of 1825 against tsarist tyranny, dedicated a poem to the Russian peasant Ivan Sussanin who preferred death at enemy hands to betrayal of his motherland (this man, as is well-known, inspired Glinka's famous Russian opera *Ivan Sussanin*).

In his poem *The Bronze Horseman*, Pushkin sang of Russia's northern capital and in many inspired verses lauded the "white-stone walls" of Moscow. His *Poltava* is a poem of a people who, under the leadership of Peter I, rose against the Swedish invader Charles XII and routed the foreign hordes in the historic battle of Poltava.

To the pen of Lermontov, who wrote the words:

*Moscow, Moscow! My love for you is like a son's
And like a Russian's—ardent, passionate and
tender!*

belong the poems *Borodino*, *In the Helmet of Gold* and many other works permeated with faith in his people and their mission. Cultured people the world over are acquainted with Gogol's novel *Taras Bulba*. His description of the knights of the "Dnieper Cossack Camp" reveals a combination of their love for freedom with a deep attachment to the motherland common to the Russian, Ukrainian and other fraternal nationalities.

What we have defined as characteristic features of Russian patriotism—devotion to the motherland, national pride and at the same time antagonism to all national limitations—stands out clearly in the works of such

Russian men of letters as Belinsky, Dobrolyubov, Chernyshevsky and Herzen.

"To love one's motherland means to passionately desire her to achieve mankind's ideals and to help her in this with all the forces at one's command. In any other case patriotism becomes the narrow kind which loves what is its own precisely because it is its own and hates everything that is someone else's just because it is someone else's," wrote Belinsky.

When one compares this humane outlook characteristic of Russian sentiment with the hysterical vociferations of the Prussian militarists and their hitlerite epigoni about the Germans allegedly being "über alles", how morally degenerate the latter appears! The words of Saltykov-Shchedrin, that great Russian satirist, on haughty Prussianism, are fittingly biting in their sarcasm. And indeed the history of culture has confirmed the justice of Dostoyevsky's words that "Shakespeare, Byron, Walter Scott and Dickens are closer and more understandable to the Russians than, let us say, to the Germans." "For," he continues, "the German believes beyond a doubt in his own victory and in the fact that nobody but he can stand at the head of the world."

Motherland contains, of course, many excerpts from Leo Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, *Sevastopol* and from his other works. Kutuzov's warriors, the bearded partisan-muzhiks who chased Napoleon's "twelve-tongued" army out of the country and the Black Sea sailors who covered themselves with glory during Sevastopol's first defence have come to life again in the present war being waged by the Soviet people.

Maxim Gorky has played an outstanding part in Soviet literature. To him belong the grim but just words: "If the enemy does not surrender, he must be destroyed." And this one short phrase reveals the "secret" of the Red Army's victories, so often mentioned in the foreign press.

"I believe," we read in one of Gorky's letters to his readers, "that never yet in the history of the world has labour revealed so clearly and convincingly its legendary power to change people and lives as it has done in our times, here, in this state of workers and peasants." The strength of the army created by this working-class state lies in the fact that it is the Red Army, "an army of fighters everyone of whom knows exactly what he is going to fight for" (1930).

The book concludes with excerpts from Mayakovsky who reminded his fellow-country-

men that with the fascist aggressor they would speak "the language of fire, of bullets, shells and bayonet point."

This "conversation" which has lasted since June 22nd, 1941, is now coming to a sorry finish for the nazi invaders.

It is through the words of philosophers, novelists and poets that the sentiments and thoughts of the people and their fighting spirit is revealed to us. The significance of a book like *Motherland* is that it shows us the development and, simultaneously, the unity of purpose of a people which has traversed a long road from the ancient marches of Prince Igor to 1917—the landmark of liberation, the year of the Soviet revolution glorified in Soviet poetry and further, to our days of unprecedented struggle. Reviewing this path we see how great a role in the creation of the people's unity of purpose has been played by their love for the motherland, love tried and tested in the crucible of labour and battle.

LEONID VOLYNSKY

War claims every effort the people are capable of. Every sphere of life, every emotion and thought are subordinated to it. Men of every age and profession live and die, fight and work for victory over a clever and rapacious foe.

We know only too well how the transition from an atmosphere of peaceful, creative work to one of a life-and-death struggle has been effected, for we have seen it with our own eyes and have participated in it. But how about those to whom it meant a transition from childhood to adolescence, from carefree dreams to grim reality?

This question forms the subject of Mark Egart's *Youth*, recently published by the Soviet Writer Publishing House. Its heroes are ordinary fourteen- and fifteen-year-old boys and girls who are not marked by any unusual abilities or courage. Nor has the war placed them in any exceptional conditions. Sanya Vedernikov's mother was one of the first victims of the enemy's perfidious attack on our country, having been killed in an air raid on a small town lying close to the border, but such was also the fate of hundreds of thousands of other Soviet citizens.

Sanya is grief-stricken, but his grief does not weaken or paralyse him. It only helps him better to comprehend things and to become a grown-up the sooner. This is also true of the other youngsters who are not to be swerved from the right path by any hard conditions of life, by danger or the whispering propaganda spread by hired or voluntary nazi agents. These youths have grown up in an atmosphere of Soviet reality and were given a Soviet education; they have learned to see through the enemy's vile aims and means, and they lost no time in finding their place in the ranks of the defenders of the country.

Sanya makes his way to Moscow and finds a new home with his uncle's wife and daughter. A friendship soon springs up between him, his cousin Marina, who is a little younger, and a neighbour, Seryozha, somewhat his senior. It is a friendship based on a community of experiences. They feel that they are part of this great struggle, and that they must try to do their utmost for the sake of victory.

To them the transition from childhood to adolescence is expressed in a realization of their responsibilities and duties first and foremost.

When Moscow is bombed they, together with grown-ups, work on the anti-aircraft defence, fearlessly put out incendiary bombs and help dig trenches. Far from considering themselves to be heroes, they simply do their bit, just like millions of boys and girls all over the country. The author did not endow them with any superior qualities to distinguish them from the rest, and therein lies the merit of Egart's book. Not only are all his characters drawn true to life, but what is much more important—he shows us Soviet youth in everyday war-time conditions with all its hardships. The modest heroism of these youngsters does not leave them for a minute, it is a feature inherent in the rank-and-file Soviet boy and girl.

Reading Egart's story we become even more convinced of the enemy's inevitable rout, for a people that boasts such boys and girls as depicted in *Youth* is invincible.

Deathly Crossing, a collection of war stories by the young Soviet writer Ivan Menshikov, is one of the latest publications of the "Young Guard" Publishing House.

This volume has been issued posthumously. Ivan Menshikov, who was war correspondent of *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, perished at the front-line. The short stories are true and simple; many of them are sketches from the front. They show the heroism of the Soviet citizen, his composure and courage in overcoming hard trials.

A wounded Red Army man and a girl who failed to leave before the enemy seized the town are left behind by the Soviet troops. Before dying the soldier gives his last grenade to the girl. Outwitting the enemy sentries, the girl blows up a petrol dump and perishes herself. (*Immortality*.)

Another story is about a locomotive engineer whose two sons are fighting in the ranks of the Red Army, the third one being in a partisan detachment. The engineer remains in a city occupied by the Germans. When the German commandant forces him to drive a supply train, he leads it full speed over a bridge which he knows has been mined by his son's partisan detachment. The train is blown up. (*The Last Trip*.)

A wounded seaman who was aboard a Red Cross ship sent to the bottom by German planes remains afloat for many days on a raft made of three logs. His strength ebbing, he desperately fights on against death. Barely alive he is finally picked up by a Soviet cutter.

"Thank you, lads!" he exclaims on recovery. "I would have been just too bad if I had died now when there's so much for me to do . . ."

(*The White Kite*.)

These words could be applied to the prematurely dead author of this interesting volume.

A Writer's Notebook is the title under which the State Literary Publishing House has just brought out Nikolai Teleshov's memoirs.

Last year the Union of Soviet Writers

marked the 75th anniversary of Teleshov's birth. One of the oldest of contemporary Russian writers, Teleshov is known also as an indefatigable social worker: he was the founder and director of the literary society "Wednesday", chairman of the "Society of Anton Chekhov and His Epoch", he has been a friend of the Moscow Art Theatre ever since its foundation, and organizer and director of its museum.

A contemporary of Leo Tolstoy, Maxim Gorky, Anton Chekhov, Vladimir Korolenko, Dmitri Mamin-Sibiryak, Ivan Bunin and other men of letters, he made lifelong friends of many of them. With simplicity, sincerity and faithfulness Teleshov tells about his meetings with them. He gives striking sketches of the most outstanding past and contemporary representatives of literature and art.

A Writer's Notebook opens up with a chapter dedicated to Moscow.

"I spent all my life in Moscow," writes Teleshov, beginning his story of writers' societies, theatrical premières and performances, of friends and meetings, of his literary and social endeavours covering half-a-century's span of life.

The first part of his notebook concludes with inspiring words about young writers.

"I have faith in them," he says, "and wish them to believe that to be a Russian writer is the greatest happiness in life."

Peter Dabčević is the name of an epic poem

by the well-known Yugoslav poet Radule Stijenski recently published by the "Young Guard" Publishing House. It is the story of a Yugoslavian popular hero, leader of the Montenegrin partisans fighting against fascism.

Stijenski's poem dedicated to the gallant youth of the Soviet Union and the valiant sons of Yugoslavia is replete with the glorious deeds of both fighting countries.

Describing the battle between the Montenegrins and the fascists at Cetinje Polje, the poet recalls the battles of Moscow, Stalingrad and other great battles in the National War of the Soviet peoples. "Never shall the Slav live under German rule!" is Peter Dabčević's slogan.

The poem consists of four long songs, a prologue and lyrical epilogue. The life of Peter Dabčević, his love for the girl Djurdjina, who goes with him to battle, and the struggle he wages against the enemy—this is the subject of Stijenski's new work.

The first song traces Dabčević's life before the invasion of Yugoslavia by the Italo-German imperialists, his childhood and youth, his participation in the struggle for Republican Spain. The other songs relate to the period when he assumes leadership of the partisan movement.

Stijenski's poem—the very language, structure and rhythm—is strongly influenced by folklore, a feature which was well conveyed in the Russian translation by William Levik.

THE MOST OFTEN USED "SECRET WEAPON": ROCKET FIGURES



Drawing by Boris Yefimov

YOUNG FOREST

There is an old parable very popular among the people. An aged man was planting a sapling. Some youths, passing by, laughed at him. Imprudent youth could not understand the wise solicitude of old age, the joy it gave the old man to think of the sweet fruit and pleasant shade the tree would give, not to himself, but to coming generations.

No doubt there were people who sneered when the Soviet government created the first children's theatres. Indeed, the moment did not seem a very propitious one! The young Soviet Republic (less than three years old at the time) was in the throes of Civil War and the Intervention. There was hunger, cold, typhus and ruin in the country. A log of birch, a pane of glass and a piece of bread, from flour mixed with chaff, was more precious than gold to the city-dweller; and a button, a faucet seemed like fragments of a civilization long swept away.

It was in these crucial years when "to be or not to be" was the burning question of the Republic of the Soviets, that the new culture was enthusiastically launched! By decree of the Council of People's Commissars the foundation was laid for the abolition of illiteracy. Every illiterate person was given free a book and a teacher (schools for the illiterate were opened in every enterprise, factory and institution) and required to devote two hours a day, of his working time, to studies. He worked six hours and studied two and was paid for a normal eight-hour working day. Despite the drastic paper shortage the state issued hundreds of thousands copies of the best works of Russian and foreign classics. The theatres opened wide their doors to the people. New spectators filled the palaces-museums, art galleries and halls of the much revered libraries.

The same profound sagacity that dictated all these measures also initiated an unprecedented novelty in the theatre world,—children's theatres. Their creation revealed the perspicacity and far-sighted solicitude of the young country for the future, for the education of the young generation. Pedagogics allied itself with that tremendous force, that fascinating and captivating power that art has over the human soul and in particular over the soul of the child.

There is a very amusing but significant anecdote in the history of the Russian theatre. Once when the great Russian tragedian, Pavel Mochalov, was playing Hamlet, a man in the audience suddenly rose and enthusiastically shouted to the actors: "Pavel Stepanovich! That meat bill is cancelled!" He was the local butcher from whom Mochalov got his meat on account. For a moment, perhaps part of a moment, this man had undergone a remarkable change under the powerful spell of art and we have the rare phenomenon of a creditor cancelling a debt due to him!

5-1516

If art can so strongly influence an adult, and one not very impressionable, at that, then how much stronger must its power be on a child! Childhood is the age to which art is nearest. The child has a vivid imagination—akin to art. The child is the very essence of emotion—like art. To the child the most brilliant article, the most clever treatise, is always dull. But the simplest fairy-tale will move him profoundly and teach him much. The child can feel long before he learns to think logically and in an orderly manner. That is why he remains indifferent to the most correct teaching whereas a vivid book, a stirring performance or a thrilling film can evoke in him the strongest emotion, make him sympathize with the heroes, share their feelings, laugh and cry with them—and it is they who can teach him to think.

It is true that although the first children's theatres appeared in our country only after the October Revolution, occasional theatre performances for children did take place in tsarist Russia also. Usually these were in the form of matinées for school-children given by theatres on Sundays and holidays and motivated by the desire of the management to attract this type of audience as well. As a rule the nature of these children's performances was entirely accidental. The theatre selected from its regular repertoire plays which it thought might interest children. Most often these were performances of a classical nature or colourful fairy-tales. But children were often shown "heart-breaking" melodramas, utterly lacking in taste, and even doubtful farces. The theatres regarded these performances, or rather their audiences, as second class. The shows were put on in a slipshod manner, the cast including, not the leading actors, but their understudies. All this came from the conviction that the young spectator was not critical, not a connoisseur of art, and that it was not necessary to stand on ceremony with him—he would swallow anything and say thank you.

Entirely different aims and principles guided the foundation of children's theatres under the Soviets. In the first place, they were planned as part of the general state system of education. Children's theatres in our country, like theatres for adults, are not the property of private owners but are maintained by the state. And whereas the theatres for adults may and often do exist by building their budget on box office receipts, children's theatres are maintained on a special subsidy from the state, and enormous funds are expended on their upkeep. This enables the children's theatres to charge minimum prices for tickets which also include cloak-room fees and the programme. The latter gives, in addition to the names of the cast, detailed notes on the performance explaining everything that might not be clear, and giving the child-spectator



"A Lone Sail Gleams White." Act IV. Staged by the State Theatre of the Young Spectator

an understanding of the period represented in the play, etc.

But, despite the fact that our children's theatres have, since their very inception, never been profitable undertakings, no attempts are made to economize on the cost of staging the performances. The state does not grudge funds, nor stop at any necessary expenses. The best actors and technicians are invited to take part in the work of the children's theatres, the performances are lavishly staged, and when necessary, with costly magnificence.

For instance, shortly before the war, Pushkin's tragedy *Boris Godunov* was given at the New Theatre of the Young Spectator in Leningrad. In the century that has passed since the death of the poet, it was the second time that this elaborate play, so difficult to stage, was given in full. The costume of Tsar Boris, in the coronation scene, cost the children's theatre many thousands of rubles. This is characteristic of the desire of children's theatres to give their young audiences the most magnificent plays in our literature, regardless of the difficulties involved; and also of our theatre's ability to undertake the production of such plays (this was one of the most significant events in Soviet art), and finally, the serious attitude towards, and deep respect for the young spectator who must be catered for generously and on a high level.

The first and main task of our children's theatres is to foster in the spectator fastidious taste and good judgement by giving him genuine and not "ersatz" art. A play is considered fit to be shown to children when

it is so pure and crystal-clear in content as to be understood by children, so simple, stirring and humane as to be suitable for young audiences. This demand was eloquently expressed once by the great Russian actor, producer and reformer of the theatre, Constantine Stanislavsky, who said: "In the children's theatre, one must act as well as in the adult theatre, in fact better, in a purer and more noble way."

There is nothing surprising, therefore, in the fact that some of the country's most famous producers, people who have deservedly won the acclaim of Soviet theatre-goers and successfully staged plays in the best-known theatres of the country, are connected with our children's theatres. Among these masters of the stage are Alexander Bryantsev and Boris Zon (Leningrad), Olga Pyzhova, Boris Bibikov and Pavel Tsetnerovich (Moscow), Vladimir Sklyarenko (Kharkov), Alexander Takashvili and Nikolai Marshak (Tbilissi). They are always supported by a cast of fine actors. There are almost no children's theatres in our country that are a sort of Noah's Ark of actors thrown together by chance for one or two seasons. The majority of the children's theatres have their permanent companies, united by common aims, opinions and understanding of their artistic tasks. In many theatres this is achieved by the fact that the actors get their training in the special school connected with that particular theatre. The young actors in these schools are instilled from the very first with the traditions and principles of the theatre. For such an actor, the theatre is home itself and the producers and mature actors, his family, guardians and teachers, devoted like himself to art. Actors rarely leave such theatres. They are not theatre-hotels catering for transient guests, but theatres where the actors work in harmony, theatre-collectives in the finest sense of the word.

This helped to produce, in a comparatively short period, a great many brilliant actors, prominent not only in our country, but thanks to the cinema, abroad as well. For example, there is Nikolai Cherkassov, noted for his playing of Alexander Nevsky in the film of the same name, as well as that of Tsarevich Alexei in the film *Peter I*, and Professor Polezhayev in *Baltic Deputy*. Boris Chirkov, who plays the leading part in the film trilogy about Maxim, was with a children's theatre for many years. Then there is Leonid Del (who plays the role of Sverdlov in three films), and the late Boris Blinov, a young and talented actor known for a number of splendid roles in the cinema including that of Commissar Furmanov in the world-famous film *Chapayev*.

Children's theatres have also brought to the fore a number of actresses who splendidly perform children's roles. It is not an easy task for a grown-up woman to play the part of a child and do it faithfully, without apparent affectation or cloying sweetness. This is difficult at the adult theatre and even more so at a children's theatre, where the audience consists of prototypes of the characters of the play—the children themselves, who are quick to note the slightest falsity in their portrayal. Great credit is due to our children's theatres

for having trained an entire generation of actresses who are capable of giving true, profound and highly-artistic performances of children's parts. Space does not permit greater detail, so we shall mention only a few of our best actresses for children's roles. They are Valentina Sperantova, Klavdia Koreneva, Lyubov Nevskaya in Moscow; Tatyana Volkova, Elisabeth Uvarova in Leningrad; Zoe Bulgakova in Novosibirsk; Anne Burstein in Kharkov; and M. Kuprishvili in Tbilissi.

The artistic and musical departments at children's theatres are also guided by the same principle: "the best for the children". The performances are staged by our foremost artists connected with the Bolshoy Theatre and the Moscow Art Theatre. The music for children's performances, a large and responsible part of the play—is written, as a rule, by our most famous composers. Particularly successful work in this field has been done by Josef Kovner of Moscow, and Nikolai Strel'nikov of Leningrad, who died shortly before the war.

The children's theatres encountered particular difficulties in composing their repertoire. Since special children's theatres did not exist before the Revolution, there was also no children's dramaturgy. At the beginning the children's theatres had at their disposal only the treasure-house of classic drama. True, this was of the richest, but not everything in it was suited or comprehensible to children. Children's theatres drew a great deal of their material from the classics and not only at the beginning when they had no other source,—they do so to this day. During the twenty odd years of their existence, children's theatres have staged the outstanding works of Russian and foreign classics, including Pushkin, Lermontov, Shakespeare, Molière, Goldoni, Schiller, Lope de Vega and others.

However, the classics solved the repertoire problem for older children only. For the younger ones the first plays given were based on fairy-tales. This material was more suitable to their age, not only because the child was fascinated by its purely aesthetic quality, its poetry and colourful fantasy, but also because the tales were particularly valuable for their ethical content—each tale contains the seed of the wisdom of the people, their morality and profound faith in the inevitable triumph of good over evil. Again, the tale lends itself easily to staging inasmuch as it invariably has a clear plot, which develops distinctly, and definite characteristics of its heroes.

Hence the children's theatres have retained, from their earliest years, a large and varied repertoire of tales. Ever present on the children's stage are the heroes of the favourite Russian folk tales: Konyok-Gorbunok (Hunchback Horse), Tsarevich Ivan, Vassilissa the Wise, the Ukrainian tale Ivassik-Telessik, the Byelorussian tale about Yanka, with his wonderful flute, the Georgian tale about the Brave Kikila, the Armenian tale about Nazar the Braggart, the Seiran from the Azerbaijanian. In addition, there are many children's plays based on fairy-tales of the peoples of Western Europe: tales by Perrault, Anderson, the Brothers Grimm, Laboulaye, E. T. A. Hoffmann and others. There are also original plays based on fairy-tales, such as *The Green Bird* by Carlo Gozzi, *The Blue Bird* by Maeterlinck, and others.

The children's theatre has staged many prose classics and, primarily, masterpieces of Russian literature. Foreign prose works have also been extensively dramatized. For instance, the play *Uncle Tom's Cabin* based on the story by Harriet Beecher-Stowe has been popular on the children's stage for more than seven-



"Ilya Muromets." Act I. Staged by the State Theatre of the Young Spectator

teen years now, the *Tale of Two Cities* and *Oliver Twist* by Dickens, *Gavroche* after Victor Hugo, *Prince and Pauper*, *Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain, *Don Quixote* by Cervantes and others have also been staged.

Several years after the inception of the children's theatres the first original plays, including comedies, dramas, and plays on heroic themes reflecting modern reality and historical episodes, began to be shown to juvenile audiences. Little by little a small but gifted group of Soviet playwrights catering to the demands of the young generation, grew up around the children's theatres. Among them were Pyotr Gorlov, Evgueni Schwarz, Leonid Del, Alexander Kron, Sergei Mikhailov, Leo Kassil, Isidor Stock and Alexandra Brustein. Occasionally, playwrights connected with the adult theatres, such as Alexei Tolstoy, Konstantin Trenyov, Mikhail Svetlov and others would write for the children's theatre.

As we know, a theatre performance is created by the united efforts of the playwright who wrote the play, the producer who stages it and clarifies the ideas of the playwright in the presentation, the actors who portray its characters, the scenic artist and the composer. But there is still another indispensable participant in the play—the spectator. He does not play a part in the play nor participate in the work of presenting it but he creates the atmosphere in the auditorium. The reaction of the audience is an elusive wave which travels from the hall to the actor, communicating to him the emotions of the spectator, and his approval or reproaches. In the adult theatre this reaction of the audience is reserved, standardized, stereotyped. There is applause when the spectator is pleased, laughter when he is moved to mirth, the whisking out of handkerchiefs when his emotions are aroused

and coughs when he is bored, and even catcalls when he is annoyed. At the children's theatre all these reactions are also present, only with greater force, frequency and variety. Children applaud more vigorously, laugh more loudly and joyously, and when they are bored, they not only cough but also shuffle their feet and converse with their neighbours. And what is more important, the child spectator intervenes in what is happening on the stage, takes an active part in the struggle represented by the actors. Older school-children applaud in the middle of an act, expressing not only their appreciation of the skill of the actor and playwright, but also their moral evaluation of the deeds of some hero and their interest in his fate. Children enthusiastically and wholeheartedly applaud to every manifestation of nobleness, heroism, pride, patriotism and unselfishness. The hero hurls a challenge in the villain's face and the audience applauds, sometimes preventing the actors from going on. The hero braves death for his country, for the happiness and freedom of his people, and is greeted by stormy applause. The audience is carried away when the hero is rescued from danger, and likewise by the death of his malicious persecutors.

Such is the reaction to the play of older school-children. That of younger ones to the fate of the hero is expressed even more spectacularly (they not only applaud but cry out and stamp their feet), even more naively and touchingly. It is amazing how infallibly the young spectator forms his opinion from the very opening scenes of the performance, as to which of the characters are good and which bad. The former the children follow with love and sincere wishes for everything good, whereas the latter they hate with all the fervour of their childish hearts, condemning injustice and violence. Once, during a show at the puppet theatre, when the mali-



"Tom Canty." Act IV. Staged by the Moscow Theatre of the Young Spectator

cious fox cleverly deceived the naive and simple-hearted little cock, and seized him in its claws, a little boy of three cried out in desperation: "Fox, fox! Don't you dare!" During another play, when the enemy was stealthily drawing close to the noble heroes who had escaped from captivity, and one of the refugees, unaware that they were being followed, suddenly spoke loudly to the other, a child in the audience exclaimed: "Sh! They'll hear you!" And when the heroes proceeded in the direction where the enemy lay in ambush, practically the entire hall resounded with cries of: "Go back, he's behind the bush!"

Such is the child spectator. And the Soviet children's theatres have always been keenly aware of their responsibility towards this wonderful audience and their duty to cultivate it in good taste for art. All the children's theatres have teachers who carry on important educational work among the young spectators. As aptly expressed by Alexander Bryantsev, one of the oldest enthusiasts of the children's theatre, it must have artists who can think like teachers, and teachers who can feel like artists. Many of the children's theatres have groups of school-children attached to them who arrange collective visits to the theatres, meetings between the schools and theatrical workers, etc. At meetings held at the theatre or in school, playwrights read their new plays to the children and listen attentively to the opinions of the young critics. Discussions of new performances are held. In many theatres there is a wall-newspaper containing the comments and opinions, requests and criticism of the audience. Historical plays are generally accompanied by special exhibitions in the foyer, displaying material which helps the audience to a better understanding of the play and the events of the period described.

This applies, for the most part, to the work of children's theatres before the war. About six months before the war started, reviews of children's theatres were held throughout the country, and the best companies were invited to Moscow, for the final review. For two weeks performances were held twice a day by the companies selected from the total number of seventy-five Soviet children's theatres. These included, besides Russian theatres, Ukrainian, Byelorussian, Georgian, Armenian, Jewish, Tatar, Uzbek, Kazakh, Kirghiz, Turkmen, Azerbaijanian and others. The performances became a real festival of Soviet culture. They proved that the first modest saplings planted in the days of the Civil War had grown into a forest of sturdy young trees—seventy-five children's theatres and several hundred puppet theatres (among the latter, which I cannot go into more fully for lack of space, there is the remarkable and unique puppet theatre directed by Sergei Obraztsov, which is loved by young and old alike).

The war has impinged upon the life of our children, bringing innumerable hardships and sufferings. It has thrust upon them the horrors of occupation, orphanhood, and terrible experience of violence and brutality. In occupied districts children were deprived for a long time of school and books, and naturally their theatre. However, most of the children's

theatres were evacuated in good-time and with every care, from places which were later seized by the enemy, as well as Leningrad, Moscow and other threatened cities. The Bryantsev children's theatre in Leningrad remained and gave its performances regularly. When a delayed-action bomb struck the adjacent building the theatre moved to other premises. Finally, many months after the blockade started, the theatre received orders to pack and leave in a few hours, and its members were removed by plane to the Urals. The following fact is most eloquent testimony of the love that the theatre company had for their theatre. The members were permitted to take with them belongings weighing up to twenty kilograms. They all sacrificed six kilograms of their quota so that as much as possible of the theatrical accessories and property could be removed.

Many theatres had to close down temporarily. Nevertheless in the autumn of 1941 the country's outstanding children's theatres reopened at their new homes in Siberia, the Urals, Kazakhstan, Altai and on the Volga. But their work had changed in many respects primarily because their audiences had changed so radically.

Whoever has seen our children in the rear during the war years will remember them with affection. In the most difficult years, and worst conditions our children strove first of all to be useful. In the very first autumn of the war, school-children, entire schools of them, went with their teachers to the fields to help gather in the harvest. Even very small children formed detachments to help in the fields and harvest the vegetables in the kitchen-gardens. Senior school-children entered vocational schools, and mastered various trades and went en masse to work in munitions plants. Some of them proved to be splendid inventors. I met a seventeen-year-old turner in Siberia, who had left school for the workbench, and whose invention reduced the work process by sixteen times, making it possible to turn out the daily quota on this particular lathe in thirty-five minutes! Many children ardently and devotedly worked in hospitals, and surrounded families of men at the front with attention and solicitude.

The child spectator flatly refused to continue being just a spectator in life. It is quite natural, therefore, that our theatres could not remain just theatres for children. They joined in the same work that the children were doing, and in many places, directed these activities. For instance, the Novosibirsk Theatre of the Young Spectator, together with the school-children of the city, opened a shop for the repair of linen and clothing for servicemen's families, and organized children's participation in the repair of school-buildings and school-equipment, etc.

In addition to their regular work, the children's theatres gave from forty to fifty plays and concerts a month for the wounded in local hospitals. Special brigades of actors of children's theatres, evacuated to the coal districts of Siberia, gave two to three concerts a day in the pits, for the heroic miners of Siberia, who, during the occupation of the Donets Basin, furnished the country with

its main supplies of coal. These brigades also went out to the collective farms. Not a single children's theatre but regularly sent out actors' brigades to the front to entertain the men with plays, singing and dancing.

It may be said without exaggeration that our children's theatres have found their place in the ranks of the great struggle and are holding this place with honour and valour.

At present the children's theatres are gradually returning from evacuation. Many of them find nothing but ashes and ruins upon their arrival. Children's theatres are joining

together with the whole country in the work of restoration, and are among the first to open their doors to the young spectators. The hour of victory is near. "Victory!" will whisper the trees in the forest. "Victory!" will breathe the wind. "Victory! Victory!" will shout the children in glee, crowding once more in happy, laughing audiences into the brightly lit schools and theatres.

And this victory of ours will be sung about by birds and poets, will be written about in history and told about in art.

ALEXANDRA BRUSTEIN

"MOSCOW SKY"

The film *Moscow Sky*, produced by Julius Raizman, became a bone of contention both among critics and cinematographers. While pointing out the merits of the film some say that the title clashes with the content, others agree with the title but criticize the dramatic action as lacking in acute situations. Still others, while accepting the title and action, object to its musical frame.

Let us try and sort out the points in dispute.

The action of the film takes place in the autumn of 1941—the peak of the German onslaught on Moscow. The nazis were cocksure of victory, they could see the Soviet capital through their binoculars. Fascist aircraft headed for Moscow, but the Moscow sky was well protected by Soviet airmen and only one or two air pirates got through. All attempts at massed raids on Moscow came to nought as everyone knows.

Now, in the summer of 1944, Muscovites scan their sky peacefully and with a just throb of pleasure. It is good whatever its aspect—spangled with a myriad stars suffused in silver moonlight or angry with gathering clouds. In a totally different spirit and with totally different feelings we awaited the coming of night in the summer of 1941. Then we peered into the Moscow sky with anxious gaze waiting for the siren scream, the sickening drone of Junkers and Messerschmitts, the searchlight's groping fingers and the racket of ack-ack.

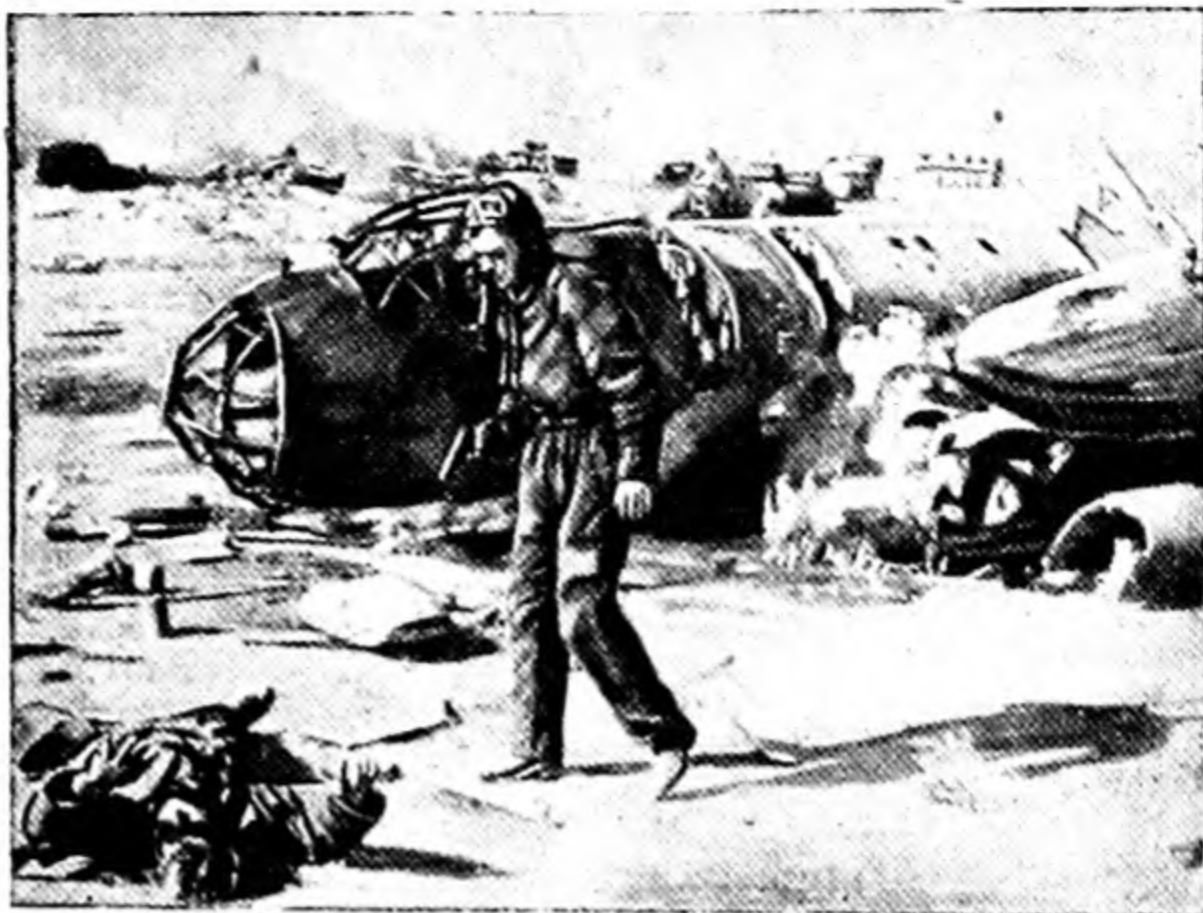
Yes, I must agree that something more is required to bring home to the onlooker the full reality of the situation and the spirit of the Soviet capital during those days and nights. Yet I believe that the audience does get the battle atmosphere when he sees the aerodrome in the Moscow suburbs from whence the city's air defence was organized, and ponders over the destiny of the aces and their young comrades who have joined the friendly fighter-pilots' family straight from the flying school.

Lieutenant Ilya Streltsov, the central character, is just such a fledgeling. Ilya thinks he is ready to go out on his own but whatever the situation. He thirsts for glory, wants to become a hero from the word "go". Fate is kind to the young "Fighting Cock" as his seniors call him in fun. On a training flight he runs into a Junkers and knocks it down. "Fighting Cock" gives way to "Lucky Dog". But the air regiment commander—Lieutenant-Colonel Balashov—will not let the youngster soar aloft on the wings of accidental suc-

cess. He keeps him on practice flights for a long time and, to the disappointment and indignation of "Lucky Dog", does not allow him to change his training plane for a fighting machine. Balashov perseveringly instils the qualities of a true fighter-pilot into his young charge and the onlooker sees how "Fighting Cock" or "Lucky Dog" steadily develops into an ace—a terror of the Luftwaffe. In one combat he positively flirts with death. With superb audacity he rams an enemy plane—lops off its tail with his own machine, floors it, bails out by parachute himself and lands safe and sound. The struggle goes on. Streltsov travels the roads of war with the fresh traces of nazi rule all too plain. Of flourishing towns and villages nothing is left but, here and there, the gaunt finger of a blackened stove chimney. Ilya Streltsov's heart is filled with that same feeling of hatred for the nazis and thirst for revenge familiar to Ukrainians and Frenchmen, to the people of Southern England and Normandy. His zeal for battle grows ever more insatiable. The more enemy aircraft he knocks down the more he wants to knock down. Not a single air pirate must be let through to Moscow's skies!

Peter Aleinikov, playing Streltsov, strives to bring out the complicated process of toughening spiritual fibre, the transformation of the raw youth into a man who has come of age, both as citizen and soldier. Onlookers, especially of the younger generation, are thrilled and held by Ilya Streltsov's actions and experiences—a sure indication of the actor's success. Youngsters are willing to go through it all with Streltsov again and again. Everyone of them wants to travel the same path in reality and wind up as Lieutenant Streltsov does: by meriting the title Hero of the Soviet Union.

Not only Streltsov as played by Peter Aleinikov, however, but all the other members of the cast convey that atmosphere of the comradeship of the service which is the film's dominant note. These captains, majors and lieutenants make a good hand of their job, quite a good hand, and all enjoy their brief spells of duty in jolly good style. There are hectic games of dominoes with the penalty for the loser, whatever his rank, to crawl under the table. . . . Wagers on anything and everything with absurd "stakes" as, for instance, a lighter against a cigarette case. And, of course, the fair sex. All try to find favour with Zoe, the nurse. Feigning a headache they



A still from the film

come to Zoe for a powder, bringing her flowers in payment. A great many more jolly artless youthful pranks fill in the, brief gaps between the commands: "To your machines!"

Ilya Streltsov fell in love with Zoe while still at the secondary school. The war brings them to the same regiment. The pedestal on which the fliers place Zoe is the occasion for jealous suspicions and stormy outbreaks from "Othello" who is jealous of every officer who exchanges a friendly word with Zoe. The service for Streltsov, though, is not only a "school of hatred" but a school of friendship and affection: he learns to understand the feeling of comradeship linking Zoe and the airmen.

And so, is this film really about the "Moscow sky" or has it got the wrong title?

I think the name is right enough. Look at it this way: if now, in 1944, the Moscow sky is quiet and clear then we owe it to Lieutenant-Colonel Balashov, to Ilya Streltsov, the "Fighting Cock" he trained and to the new young fighter-pilots now being trained by him.

At the end of the film we see another young lieutenant straight from the flying-school. He is met by Captain Streltsov just as Streltsov in his time had been met by Lieutenant-Colonel Balashov. There are the same professional questions about the types of machines he has flown and about night flights, the same instructions about forthcoming active service and the same paternal "You'll be all right, lad," with which the regiment commander usually closed his talks with the young pilots.

Reproaches as to the dramatic action of the film are better founded. True enough, some of the clashes intended by the scenario,—Ilya's jealousy of Captain Goncharov's friendly footing with Zoe, for instance,—are not developed with enough conviction and vigour. Here the critics are right. But to a certain extent this is the producer's style. He is fond of poesy and colour, is interested not so much in "explosions" as in shades of feeling, in psychological studies. In this he is a master. In his preceding film too, *Mashenka*, which, by the way, was shown abroad, much is conveyed by fine shading and significant details.

Julius Raizman knows how to work with his actors, to bring out the individuality and talents of each. This is true in full measure of the performances of Peter Aleinikov and Nina Mazayeva as Zoe. *Moscow Sky* is Mazayeva's first appearance. She is the student of the State Institute of Cinematography. The young actress is indebted not only to her innate talent but to the guiding hand of the producer for the memorable scene at the bedside of slumbering Ilya. You believe in her tears and sense her warm breath as she bends over her beloved.

The small part of Natasha Streltsova is played by Liza Kaplunova, a pupil at a Moscow music school. This is the first time Kaplunova has faced the camera. There is a great deal of attractive fun in her performance. Her intonations are full of mischief, her expression and gestures as clear as words.

The shooting of air combats was a serious problem and tribute should be paid to the resource both of the producer and the leading cameraman, Eugene Andrikanis. The fake shots made by the masters of the business Alexander Ptushko and cameraman Nicholas Renkov are superb. Their shots reproducing air battles cannot be distinguished from the genuine article.

Nobody objects to the music which is borrowed from Rachmaninov, for who doesn't appreciate Rachmaninov? But some feel that a modern war film requires modern music and even if it is not by a composer, who is a direct participant in the war, at least it should be by an onlooker. I raised the point with the producer. He replied: "I was attracted by the opportunity of using music which has already become classic and is modern at the same time, capable of expressing in full the spirit of the Russian people, their struggle and their passions. That is why I chose Rachmaninov."

A Moscow student who guarded the Moscow roofs during the summer and autumn of 1941 said of the film: "I love Moscow and her sky. I like *Moscow Sky* not only because I saw its heroes in action in reality, but because the film gives us a piece of present-day history."

OLEG LEONIDOV

SOVIET ARCHITECTURE

In common with all other fields of culture, Soviet architecture has made vast progress during the past twenty years. This is particularly true of the Five-Year-Plan periods preceding the present war.

The new industries provided a solid basis for scientific town planning and construction on a scale hitherto unknown.

The need to rebuild such large towns as Baku and Grozny in the Caucasus, Stalingrad and Gorky on the Volga, and Novossibirsk—to name but a few—became evident during the first Five-Year-Plan period. The tremendous work involved in drawing up the general plan for the reconstruction of Moscow was begun in this period.

Workers' settlements sprang up at Magnitogorsk, Dnieprostoy, at the big construction sites in the Donbas coalfields, in Siberia, the Urals and elsewhere. Today they are regular towns.

The basis for new town-planning was laid in pre-war years. The building of palaces of culture, theatres, schools, government and civic buildings, etc., created new opportunities for Soviet architects.

Public utilities received special attention. An outstanding example is the Moscow Subway. The Soviet government instructed the architects to design underground stations that would resemble palaces—with plenty of air and light. In addition to serving the convenience of the public, these stations were to help inculcate a taste for beauty and art.

Of real importance for the development of Soviet architecture was the designing of the Palace of Soviets in Moscow—one of the world's largest buildings. The Palace is conceived as a monument to Lenin, the founder of the Soviet state.

The U.S.S.R. Agricultural Exhibition, opened a few years before the outbreak of war, reflected the main trends in Soviet architecture, and served to sum up the progress made in this field. The achievements of Soviet architecture were also demonstrated abroad—the U.S.S.R. pavilions at the International Fair in Paris (1937) and at the New York World's Fair (1939).

The idea guiding Soviet architecture is love and care for the people—an idea advanced by the Soviet system and formulated by Joseph Stalin. This idea forms the basic tone of Soviet law governing town-planning and determines the system of housing and civic construction.

The peaceful constructive efforts of Soviet people, undertaken on a tremendous scale, were cut short by the treacherous nazi attack on the U.S.S.R. in June 1941.

In war-time architects devoted all their efforts and knowledge to erecting defences. Many architects selflessly worked at industrial enterprises evacuated to the eastern areas of the country. No small part was played by architects who camouflaged important buildings and plants. The men engaged in the Palace of Soviets switched over to war work, but they have not given up their main job. True, construction of the Palace has been postponed for the duration of the war, but its

architects are constantly working on the complex involved problems finding the most suitable architectural means of portraying the heroic struggle of the Civil War of 1918—1921, peaceful socialist construction and the heroism of the Soviet people in the present war against the nazis.

This year Soviet architects have been enthusiastically working on the restoration of towns liberated from the nazis and deliberately destroyed by them during their retreat.

The nazis wantonly demolished Russia's national shrines and architectural monuments of other peoples of the Soviet Union. Novgorod and Pskov, two of Russia's oldest cities, whose buildings were carefully preserved as relics of ancient Russian art, now lie in ruins. The German invaders devastated the Ukrainian cities Kiev and Chernigov. They savagely destroyed the magnificent palaces, parks and fountains of Peterhof and Pavlovsk, near Leningrad. In besieged Leningrad architects succeeded in preserving many of the city's monuments.

In reconstructing liberated Soviet towns, architects strive to preserve specimens of ancient Russian art and culture and the general architectural ensemble of the town, wherever this is possible.

Architecture has been one of the special concerns of the Soviet government. During the war a special U.S.S.R. Committee on Architecture was set up under the Council of People's Commissars, this committee being the government body in spheres of architecture. The appointment of this committee will facilitate the development of architecture and the utilization of experience gained in the U.S.A. and Great Britain. The setting up of this committee, in war-time, is proof of the Soviet people's wish to continue their constructive efforts and restore in the shortest possible time the towns destroyed by the nazis.

The Academy of Architecture of the U.S.S.R. is the chief research and artistic centre for Soviet architecture. The Academy which was founded some ten years ago, recently held its sixth session to discuss the results of ten years' work and map out the tremendous tasks ahead.

This session could look with pride on those ten years. The Academy has trained a large number of highly skilled architects. The country's leading experts cooperated in the work of its many research institutes which elaborated vital problems of an artistic and technical nature. It is needless to speak of the Academy's part in rebuilding towns destroyed by the nazi, a job which is now well in hand.

War-time building has introduced a new factor in Soviet architecture—speed. Speed, in combination with technical efficiency and, especially, with good artistic qualities, is today the main demand made of plans for rebuilding destroyed towns.

The important feature of this work of reconstruction is that all plans try to eliminate the haphazard nature of pre-war towns. Soviet architects aim not simply at re-erecting the old towns, but at building new, modern towns on the ruins of the old.

Wherever possible, the new designs make use of the existing layout and care is taken to preserve the more valuable buildings designed by noted Russian architects of past centuries.

This is particularly true of Novgorod, Smolensk and Kalinin (formerly Tver). Novgorod's fine old buildings on the restoration of which Academician Alexei Shchushev is now working, are to play a prominent part in the future skyline of the reconstructed city. The ancient architectural monuments of this old Russian town were savagely demolished by the nazis who sought to wipe out every trace of Russia's great national culture.

Smolensk, where the work of restoration is in the charge of Academician George Holz, stands on a picturesque site, in a sweeping semi-circle overlooking the Dnieper. Several fine XII century churches have been preserved here, as well as the ancient fortress wall, built round the city at the close of the XVI century. The features of ancient Smolensk will be preserved and form a constituent part of the new city.

In Kalinin, where Academician Nikolai Colley is in charge of restoration work, the splendid layout of the town and the XVIII century buildings designed by Matvei Kazakov and Nikitin, who conceived Tver as an *ouverture* to the architectural ensemble of St. Petersburg, will form an important part of the new city.

The lack of harmony between the city and its surroundings was a characteristic shortcoming of many XIX century towns. Rostov, for example, was separated from the Don, Stalingrad from the Volga, Novorossiisk from the Black Sea.

In Novorossiisk, a group of architects headed by the author of this article, are working on plans that will architecturally link the city with the Black Sea. Among other things our plan provides for several groups of buildings commanding a view of the sea. Landscape

architecture is to be widely introduced, and special types of apartment houses, conforming with the local climatic conditions, will be built.

In Voronezh Academician Lev Rudnev's design makes the river part of the city's plan, while preserving the general features of the existing layout, to which will be added a new embankment, which will merge with the main city streets. A dam is to be built, so as to raise the water-level, forming a big lake in the immediate vicinity of Voronezh.

The same problem of linking up the river and the city is provided for in the reconstruction of Rostov, where this work is headed by Academician Vladimir Semyonov.

Plans for the reconstruction of Stalingrad are being drawn up by Karo Alabyan. Here the linking of the city with the Volga—the largest river in Europe—is facilitated by the fact that Stalingrad stretches along the river bank. The terrace-principle, as worked out by the Academy of Architecture's research institutes, is being applied in designing the future city of Stalingrad.

In addition to reports by the above-mentioned architects, the session of the Academy of Architecture also discussed several papers on the organizational and technical aspects of modern town planning.

Soviet architects are today confronted with truly gigantic tasks, the execution of which will require tremendous effort and the cooperation of all architects and kindred artists throughout the country.

In working on the restoration of war-damaged towns and in designing new buildings, Soviet architects strive to create architectural monuments that will last through the ages as a perpetuation of the heroism of the Soviet people in the victorious war against fascism.

BORIS YOFAN,
Academician

ART NEWS

"THE LAST SACRIFICE" AT THE MOSCOW ART THEATRE

The Last Sacrifice is a comedy written by the Russian playwright Alexander Ostrovsky towards the end of his life. Its premiere took place in Moscow on November 8th, 1877, with the famous comedy actor, Nikolai Muzil, in the main rôle. It was produced eighteen times in the Maly Theatre and then again in 1895 at the benefit performance given by Olga Sadovskaya, a member of the famous family of Russian actors, which has been appearing on the stage of the Maly Theatre for over a century.

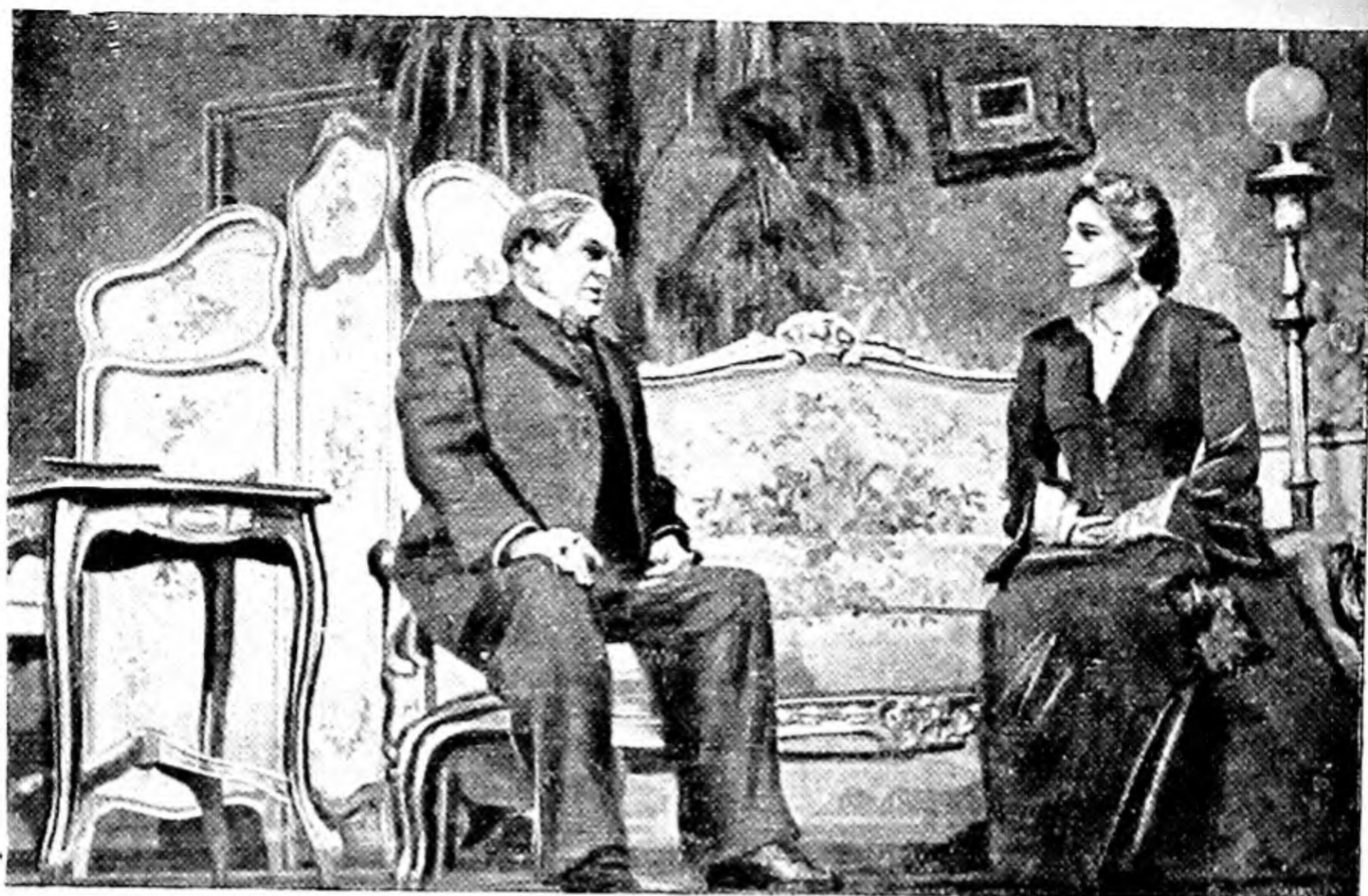
On the Soviet stage, too, *The Last Sacrifice* has been produced several times. Before the war it formed part of the repertoire of many Moscow theatres, including the Mossoviet, Red Army and Yermolova theatres. This Russian classic comedy was also an outstanding success on the Ukrainian stage, where it was performed in Ukrainian, the gifted actress Natalie Uzhvi in the main rôle.

And now, at the end of the third year of the war, this play is being once more staged by the

Moscow Art Theatre, the best in the country, under the direction of Nikolai Khmelyov, a pupil and close follower of Constantino Stanislavsky.

The play, very straightforward and realistic, deals with the fate of Julia, a young merchant's widow, who gives her entire fortune to the man she loves only to be abandoned by him for a still richer bride. The chief interest of the plot is centered around its two main figures—Julia and the aged millionaire, Flor Pribytkov.

Julia's part holds great artistic vigour, and such eminent Russian actresses as Glikeria Fedotova, Maria Savina, Maria Yermolova and Vera Kommissarzhevskaya showed a marked preference for this rôle. Formerly the part of Julia was interpreted as a dreamy, aesthetic person with a romantic soul and a most vivid imagination, one to whom love meant utter forgetfulness of everything else, one who could love and grieve with equal passion—an interpretation calling more for a *tragedienne*. However, Alla Tarassova, an outstanding actress of the Moscow Art Theatre, performs the



"The Last Sacrifice" staged by the Moscow Art Theatre. Ivan Moskvina as Pribytkov and Alla Tarassova as Julia

heroine's part in a different vein. Her Julia is just an ordinary individual, clean-hearted, yet with a keen, practical mind. A young, beautiful Russian woman, she had found no happiness in her former married life. Even now it does not come easily to her: the price is constant doubt and anguish, she humiliates herself by making the "last sacrifice" when she goes on her knees to an old millionaire to beg for money to give her dissipated lover, Vadim Dulchin, whom she hopes to marry.

In the middle of the wedding preparations, when Julia seems to be vibrating with an inner light, she is devastated by the news of Vadim Dulchin's engagement to a rich heiress. In this scene Alla Tarassova behaves very simply and even calmly, but what pain and torture sound in her broken, helpless voice! In depicting this episode the author has shown great boldness and a sense of deep, realistic truth: not only is she an abandoned, suffering woman, grief-stricken, but she cannot help realizing also that she is now penniless and has no means of supporting herself; that she has been robbed. These seemingly "prosaic" considerations fail to detract from the depth and force of her despair, for it is the voice of life itself which sounds in them! In embodying this idea of the great playwright Alla Tarassova displays exceptional sincerity.

The actor, Ivan Moskvina, has created a complex and fine psychological study of the old merchant Flor Pribytkov. Attracted by Julia's looks he first appears in her house as "purchaser", but finding her a woman with a tender passionate heart, proud, honest and resolute, his attitude gradually changes. First respect and then true love eventually grows within him. Perhaps for the first time, this man, used to value everything in terms of money, is faced by something immeasurably bigger and

more important. In the masterly performance given by Moskvina, Flor Pribytkov is, however, a man of great inner force, of well-controlled passions and high dignity.

Playing the part of the handsome Vadim Dulchin, the actor Mark Prudkin has created a striking picture of a pimp and egoist. Even at the fateful moment, when Julia visits him for the last time to take back her portrait, he finds no sincere word to say to her, and the latter leaves with old man Pribytkov, heart broken and crushed. Thus, arm in arm with him she will now spend the rest of her life. True, she will have wealth and every luxury, but happiness—never!

This play, as rendered by the excellent cast of the Art Theatre, gives a perfect picture of the mercantile life, customs and types of Russia during the seventies of last century. Outstanding in its "portrait gallery" is the image of the Moscow gossip monger, as rendered by the actress Faina Shevchenko; her idea of life is to make money any odd way, eat well and fulfil shady commissions. The part of Luka Dergachov, a parasite and hanger-on, is performed with inimitable brilliance by the actor Vassili Toporkov, whose every gesture and intonation of voice are extremely biting and telling.

The artist Dmitriyev's fine decorations and scenery serve to enhance the vividness of the performance.

Although *The Last Sacrifice* has been called a comedy by the author himself, it in no way lacks genuine tragic force. In fact, in one of his letters Alexander Ostrovsky writes the following: "... I am writing a play and gathering up my last strength to finish it. The touching plot, to which I have devoted myself completely, agitates me more and more..."

The Moscow Art Theatre has succeeded in

giving a truthful picture of the emotions which stirred Ostrovsky and in this lies the chief value of the performance. Life itself, as depicted by the playwright, has been revealed with exceptional force by the cast of that outstanding theatre.

SERGEI BOGOMAZOV

Captain Yuli Chepurin, eye-witness and active participant in the great battle of Stalingrad, has written a play dealing with the historical battle on the banks of the Volga. The Central Red Army Theatre, in staging this play, has created a truly folk spectacle in the heroic mould.

The play *Stalingraders* is ushered in by the roar of guns, ominous voice of war. It sounds monstrously senseless against the background of the peaceful Volga landscape, with the smoke of the fishermen's bonfire slowly rising to the sky, with the nets hung out to dry, with the majestic waters of the Volga flowing calmly in the morning mist. But the war reaches this peaceful land and, step by step, the play reveals to the audience the epic struggle of the heroic Russian people.

The peaceful family meal is interrupted by the ominous whistling of a bomb; heart-rending cries of people drowning in the river pierce the air; streams of refugees pour out of the city where street fighting is already in progress; mothers who have lost their children, a little girl dying in the arms of an old woman, a blind old man pressing a strange child to his heart. . . All these individual tragedies form but one image, that of heroic Stalingrad, its flaming ruins reflected in the Volga, still fighting back. A series of brief episodes reveal to the audience the character of Stalingrad defenders. A clerk at headquarters thrown into the water by an air-wave, still clings to his valise containing medals to be awarded to the city's defenders. A commissary, mortally wounded, in his delirium worries about a receipt for food to be distributed among the Stalingrad population; a girl telephone operator repairs the line, paying no attention to the bombs dropped by enemy planes.

The main episode of the play is the heroic resistance of a handful of Red Army men, encircled in the ruins of a building by the attacking Hitlerites. For five long, excruciating days they repulse the enemy's onslaught; their munitions are running low and the last scrap of food has been consumed, but they are firm and unshakable as a rock, and between two explosions they exchange cheerful words and even joke. Soviet generals and officers are shown true-to-life—stout defenders of Stalingrad, resolute, selfless men of iron will, who fought and eventually repulsed the German war machine.

The drama winds up symbolically—long rows of German prisoners being led eastwards and Soviet troops moving west.

Laureate of the Stalin Prize Alexei Popov and the entire cast have succeeded in creating a moving embodiment of a glorious page of the National War—the defence of Stalingrad. Nisson Shifrin's settings give a truthful, realistic picture of the war atmosphere without any embellishments.

The Duel, a play by the Tour brothers and

Lev Sheinin, based on a detective story, has been staged by the Lenin Komsomol State Theatre in Moscow. This type of literature, in its highest form, enjoys much popularity among Russian readers. The works of Conan Doyle, Gilbert Chesterton and others are highly appraised in the Soviet Union.

Captain Bakhmetyev of the State Safety, the hero of the Play *The Duel*, has been assigned to watch over the life of Leontyev, a famous engineer, who has been sent to the front on a special mission. He is the inventor of a powerful cannon, and the German secret service has long been seeking an opportunity either to kidnap or murder him. Petronescu, a spy and diversionist, has been assigned by the German secret service to get on Leontyev's tracks and either kill him or seize him alive. Learning of the latter's arrival at the front, Petronescu and his gang, disguised as workers and collective farmers manage to penetrate the front-line zone. They effect a parachute landing near the unit visited by Leontyev and appear under the guise of a delegation which has arrived with presents for the men. But Captain Bakhmetyev, who, acting as his chauffeur, accompanies Leontyev everywhere, becomes suspicious of the insistence with which the so-called "delegates" make their inquiries and decides to pose as Leontyev. The spies swallow the bait, and kidnap Bakhmetyev in the firm belief that they have caught the famous Soviet inventor at last.

Zorin, the commissar of State Safety, has been following Bakhmetyev's operations from Moscow, and as a result of his energetic measures Bakhmetyev is rescued and the spy trapped.

The play grips the audience, its action develops rapidly, the fates of the heroes are cleverly interwoven and the story is well and excitingly written. This production, staged by Ivan Bersenev, has received a warm write-up in the press.

Puccini's opera *Madame Butterfly* has been produced at the Kazakh National Theatre for the first time. This premiere took place in Alma-Ata, the capital of Soviet Kazakhstan, with the actress Kulyash Bayseitova in the main role. The opera found great favour with the Kazakh audience.

The Uzbek National Theatre for opera and ballet recently celebrated its fifth anniversary. During these five years, in addition to the ballet *Ak-Bilyak*, four national operas were performed: *Snowstorm*, *Leila and Medzhnun*, *Ulugbek* and *The Great Canal*. Excerpts from all these were given at the anniversary performance and showed the progress made by the theatre. An act from Bizet's opera *Carmen*—the first European opera to be staged on the Uzbek stage—was also given.

A short time ago the entire country celebrated the 70th birthday of Ivan Moskvina, People's Artist of the U.S.S.R. and Laureate of the Stalin Prize. "A Great Artist", "The Pride of the Russian Stage"—such were the headlines of Moscow newspaper articles written by outstanding critics and art connoisseurs.

Moskvina's creative life has been closely

bound up with the Moscow Art Theatre where forty-five years ago he made his first stage appearance. This occurred in the opening play of the theatre's first season (1898-1899), when he acted as Tsar Fyodor in Alexei Tolstoy's tragedy *Tsar Fyodor Ioannovich*.

Moskvin has created numerous striking, unforgettable and inspiring roles. This actor himself has often said: "I am happy in having appeared in works by Griboyedov, Pushkin, Gogol, Dostoyevsky, Leo Tolstoy, Alexander Ostrovsky, Chekhov, Gorky, writers who viewed life, not with half an eye, but with several eyes, and who heard it not with half an ear but with several ears."

On his 70th birthday Moskvin again appeared as Tsar Fyodor. Just before his death Constantine Stanislavsky, the founder of the Moscow Art Theatre, wrote to Moskvin on the occasion of the 600th performance of *Tsar Fyodor Ioannovich*:

"It is far from easy to play any minor role for any length of time, but to play a role like that of Fyodor for so many years with equal temperament and feeling, giving one's entire self to it, is an overwhelming achievement; 600 such achievements constitute a heroic deed. You have performed such a deed and it has greatly contributed to the fame enjoyed by the Art Theatre both in Russia as in Europe and America."

... A thunder of applause from the audience which overflowed the theatre on that memorable evening, greeted Moskvin's appearance on the stage. With amazing force and brilliant mastery the seventy-year-old actor performed the part of the young Russian tsar, the gentle, ecstatic, naive and dreamy son of Ivan the Dread.

After the performance, members of the cast, Moskvin's friends and representatives of state, social and military organizations gathered on the stage which still contained the settings of the last act.

Mikhail Khrapchenko, chairman of the Committee on Arts attached to the Council of People's Commissars of the U.S.S.R., was the first to congratulate Moskvin on his 70th birthday and on the Order of Lenin with which the Soviet government had awarded the actor for his outstanding services. Vassili Kachalov, People's Artist of the U.S.S.R. and an old friend and co-worker of Moskvin, addressed the latter in the name of the actors of the Art Theatre. Alexandra Yablochkina, the oldest Russian actress and chairman of the All-Russian Theatrical Society, spoke next on behalf of all the theatres of the capital. Lieutenant-General N. A. Sokolov-Sokolyonok, head of the Zhukovsky Military Aviation Academy, of which the Art Theatre has made itself patron, spoke of the affection and respect which Moskvin enjoys among the men of the Red Army. Alexander Pokrovsky, chairman of the Soviet Artists' Trade Union, spoke of the social activity conducted by Moskvin as deputy to the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R. and as initiator of the movement in which those who work in the different fields of art became the Red Army's cultural patrons.

In a stirring reply, Moskvin thanked the government for the high award and expressed

his warm gratitude to the assembled audience.

Despite his seventy years, Moskvin's talent is still in its full vigour. Some time after his celebration he gave a brilliant performance of the difficult part of the old merchant in the new setting of Alexander Ostrovsky's comedy *The Last Sacrifice* produced at the Art Theatre. (See page 73 of this issue.)

Not long ago Moskvin was elected chairman of the theatrical section of the U.S.S.R. Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries (V.O.K.S.) which aims at establishing closer friendly, creative relations with the theatrical circles of democratic countries throughout the world.

A new musical programme dedicated to the Volga and entitled *Russian River*, was recently presented by the Song and Dance Ensemble of the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs. Somewhat after the style of a musical and folk pageant, the glorious past of the great Russian river is revived in a series of episodes. It was here, on the banks of the Volga, that Kozma Minin and Prince Dmitri Pozharsky in 1609-1610 organized a popular patriotic movement against the foreign invaders who then held Moscow. It was along the Volga that Stepan Razin, the hero of Russian legends and songs, led his free Cossacks in daring raids. Here stood the proud and beautiful city of Stalingrad, the bulwark of creative labour in peace-time and the symbol of the unbending spirit of the Russian people in the days of the National War. All this abundance of historical material offered a splendid background for such a spectacle, replete with songs, old and new, with folk dances and powerful dramatic scenes. The programme closes with a solemn song which is accompanied by a salute of guns and rockets shooting up over the ancient walls of the Kremlin. To quote the composer Aram Khachaturyan: "The stirring finale of the programme is so powerful that the audience is gripped by the same emotions which it so often experiences at the sight of a real salute in the streets of Moscow in honour of the heroic Red Army."

Russian River is staged by Ruben Simonov and the settings are by Peter Williams, one of the best Soviet decorative artists.

Following upon the liberation of Byelorussia from the German invaders, the Byelorussian national cinema studio has resumed its activity. Its first film is entitled *Live On, My Native Byelorussia!*

This film, which is a sort of dramatized concert, depicts the life and customs of the Byelorussian village. The film is accompanied by songs of happy pre-war Byelorussia and displays the beautiful nature of that country.

The second part of the film deals with Byelorussia in the days of the National War, with cavalry General Leo Dovator, the heroic pilot Captain Nikolai Gastello and other gallant sons of the Byelorussian people. A considerable section of the film is dedicated to the heroic struggle of the Byelorussian partisans who fought the Germans in the woods and marshes of their native Byelorussian Republic.

NEWS AND VIEWS

FORTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF CHEKHOV'S DEATH

In her interesting reminiscences of Anton Chekhov, the well-known Russian poetess and translator Tatyana Shechepkina-Kupernik wrote that a good many of Chekhov's utterances proved prophetic, but in one thing he was wrong; this was when he declared: "I'll soon be forgotten. After I'm dead my works will be read for about seven years at the most."

Yes, Chekhov was wrong in this prophecy of his. Not seven, but forty years have passed and his works are still being published and republished in enormous editions, his plays are being staged and his works are being adapted for films. Proof of the tremendous popularity of his works was particularly manifest in the days when the whole Soviet country, and progressive people abroad too, marked the fortieth anniversary of his death. It will be no exaggeration to say that in the literary and theatrical life of the U.S.S.R. the month of July, 1944 was truly a Chekhov festival.

The Soviet government enacted a number of measures to perpetuate the memory of this great Russian author. Monuments to the writer are to be erected in Moscow and his birthplace—Taganrog; various cultural institutions were named in honour of Chekhov; Chekhov scholarships were instituted in several educational establishments; Malaya Dmitrovka, the street where Chekhov lived in Moscow, was renamed Chekhov Street, etc.

During the Chekhov anniversary days both central and provincial newspapers contained scores of articles on Chekhov, recollections and unpublished material on his life and activities.

It was during days of fierce fighting against the nazi invaders, days of brilliant and continuous victory for the Red Army, that Russia marked the fortieth anniversary of Chekhov's death. In this connection the Moscow *Pravda* emphasized that it is in today's great war that the Russian's national traits have shown up in their full power—courage, a deep consciousness of their dignity, unselfish love for their Motherland, simplicity and modesty, and respect for free labour. The best features of the great Russian nation found expression in the literature created by Pushkin and Tolstoy, by Belinsky and Chernyshevsky, by Chekhov and Gorky. *Pravda* pointed out that Chekhov revealed the Russian to the whole world, revealed the Russian's inherent talent, his generous character, his untiring search for truth and justness in social relations, his love for labour, knowledge and culture.

The Moscow newspaper *Komsomolskaya Pravda* gave a topical article called *The Writer and the Present Time*, in which we read the following lines: "As in a deep, lucid lake, practically the whole of Russia was reflected in Chekhov's stories."

The tenderly poetic description of Russian

nature and the Russian character to be found in Chekhov's writings, is today perceived with a new force, for the Russian people's love for her steppes, fields and forests has become doubled, even trebled, now that they have been liberated from the foe. Chekhov loved to build and decorate the earth. The finest figures in Chekhov's world are the people of toil. He senses the poesy of labour—Maxim Gorky once said of Chekhov. This poesy of labour as the foundation of culture, this love for the Russians and faith in their talents, places Chekhov in close kinship with modern days—concludes the author of the article printed in *Komsomolskaya Pravda*.

In an article in another central newspaper, *Izvestia*, Chekhov is spoken of as a poet of the rank-and-file Russian people, discovering the unnoticed beauty hidden in their lives, in their common-place, everyday existence. The author of this article rightly declares that the anniversary of the death of this great national artist is a reminder to the whole world of the moral, cultural and aesthetic values and ideals so precious to all progressive mankind for which the Russians are today fighting to bring about the final defeat of the Hitler death-carriers.

The *Komsomolskaya Pravda* arranged a questionnaire among its readers: "Why I like Chekhov?"

"I love Chekhov for the optimism, the truth, the soft laughter, the pensive sadness in which there is so much bright hope and faith in all that is beautiful," writes a woman employed in a kindergarten.

"I like to read and re-read Chekhov because I love my land so poetically sung by him. . . The world will always preserve the memory of the singers of straight-forward, pure and untrammelled attitude towards nature and man. For me, Chekhov always has been and always will be such a singer," writes a student of the Moscow University.

"I am at present in hospital, recovering from wounds received in action. The first books I re-read on arriving in Moscow were Tolstoy's *War and Peace* and Chekhov's stories. Different books, and different authors, but they both teach one and the same thing: to love our native country. Reading their books, one feels cheered and invigorated, more honest, one gets a deeper insight into life and gains a better understanding of people,"—is what a Guards Lieutenant, Hero of the Soviet Union, wrote.

The *Vechernyaya Moskva* published a very interesting and hitherto unknown letter from Chekhov to the editor of the journal *Russkaya Mysl* (Russian Thought), Vukol Lavrov. Protesting against an attack by an anonymous critic in this journal who accused him of being unprincipled, Chekhov wrote: "I never flattered, lied nor insulted; in short, I have many stories and editorial articles which I would gladly throw away as useless, but there is not a single line which today could give me cause for shame."

This letter speaks strongly and convincingly of the impeccable moral purity of Chekhov who, with all his innate modesty, could, when the need arose, give a scathing and worthy reply to the insulting attacks of literary antagonists.

Several articles published during the anniversary days bring up and cast new light on the problem of Chekhov's innovations in his dramatic works and his relations with stage circles and the world of letters around him.

The State Literary Publishing House has printed several books of Chekhov's works, in all 450,000 copies, and also the first of eighteen volumes of Chekhov's complete works. A large number of copies of Chekhov's works have also been published in various national republics in the different languages of the peoples of the U.S.S.R., including Azerbaijan, Uzbek, Kirghizian etc.

Chekhov's plays are now showing in ninety-three theatres, in Russian, Ukrainian, Armenian, Azerbaijan, Kazakh, Avarian and many other Soviet Union languages. The staging of Chekhov's plays has been a tradition of the Moscow Art Theatre since the day it was founded, forty-six years ago; in recent years his play *The Three Sisters* has not left the stage. During the anniversary days this play was also staged and is now being shown at the Stanislavsky Opera and Drama Theatre Studio in Moscow.

The repertoires of practically all the Moscow theatres include Chekhov's plays. The Kamerny is showing a concert performance of *The Seagull*. This was the first Chekhov's play staged by the Art Theatre, and it became the emblem of this famous theatre, the stage curtain of which is embroidered with a seagull in flight, which also heads all the Art Theatre programmes and announcement bills. In this musical setting of *The Seagull* made by the art director and producer of the Kamerny Theatre, Alexander Tairov, the music of Chekhov's favourite composer, Chaikovsky, is used. The main role, Nina Zarechnaya, is played by the Kamerny's leading actress Alice Koonen.

The Vakhtangov Theatre in Moscow is showing the vaudevilles *The Proposal*, *The Bear*, *The Anniversary* and *The Witch*.

The forceful vigour and the keen and lively dialogue of Chekhov's stories are well-known and no great changes need be introduced to make these words ring out from the stage. And both the Moscow Theatre of Drama and the Mossoviet Theatre arranged a programme of stage adaptations of Chekhov stories. In the Drama Theatre this programme is presented under the general title of *Motley Tales* comprising eleven pieces, mainly of a humorous nature: *Even Though the Meeting Did Take Place*, . . . , *Thick and Thin*, and other stories.

At a Chekhov evening at the Mossoviet Theatre we are shown another Chekhov, a Chekhov smiling through tears (the stories *The Chorus Girl* and *The Huntsman*); this performance also includes the vaudeville *Tragedian by Force*.

The State Institute of Stage Art in Moscow has especially prepared two companies of performers, with a ready-made repertory, who are shortly leaving for Taganrog where a theatre has just been organized and named after Chekhov.

Several interesting evenings and recitals were held at the Writers' Club in Moscow, especially that at which Kornei Chukovsky—a master of literary portrait painting—read fragments of his large new work on Chekhov.

There are many people living who knew Chekhov intimately—his sister Maria Chekhova who, under the cruel conditions of nazi occupation nevertheless succeeded in preserving the Chekhov dwelling-house-museum in Yalta intact; his widow, Olga Knipper-Chekhova, the well-known actress of the Moscow Art Theatre; the writer Nikolai Telešov, Tatyana Shechepkina-Kupernik, and others, all of whom generously contributed to the anniversary undertakings by making public appearances in which they spoke of their reminiscences of Anton Chekhov.

A very touching story was told by an old school-master from Melikhovo, a countryside near Moscow, where Chekhov used to live in the summer. This school-teacher told many characteristic incidents concerning Chekhov's responsive and considerate attitude towards people.

Shechepkina-Kupernik also spoke, giving examples of the great love and attention Chekhov evinced towards people. Anton Chekhov, who was a certified physician, would travel scores of miles, whatever the weather, to take some medicine to his peasant-patients. Shechepkina-Kupernik conveyed a fascinating picture of Chekhov's mild and pleasant humour, of his jocosity and knack of approaching each person individually. At that time, a beginner in poetry, she once read him some of her verses. "What lovely lines!" Chekhov exclaimed. "You've copied them out of some old journal, of course!" he teasingly added. Shechepkina-Kupernik told of Chekhov's cultural activities, of the schools organized in Melikhovo and the surrounding villages; of the public library Chekhov founded in Taganrog and to which he gave all the books from his private library, and regularly sent books from Moscow. She also spoke of the innate modesty of the great dramatist:

"Anton Pavlovich spoke very little about himself. Only occasionally would he share a word or two regarding the subject of a story he was writing at the time: 'I'm writing about a doctor who suffers from hallucinations...' or, bringing out his notebook, would read out an oddish name which struck his fancy, or a cute phrase which he had accidentally overheard, on board a steamer, for instance, such as: 'Jean, your birdie's feeling seasick!'

"He hated being paid compliments, and always tried to change the subject in such cases. I recall once telling him in his later years (our conversation was about *The Three Sisters* in the Art Theatre) that one gets the impression that one is not sitting in a theatre but is peeping at someone else's life. Screwing up his eyes so that wrinkles were set running from their corners, he remarked: 'That's because of the way they play it: they're crafty.'"

A grand Chekhov memorial meeting was held in the Bolshoy Theatre in Moscow on the anniversary day of the dramatist's death. An exhaustive report was made at this meeting by the President of the Union of Soviet Writers of the U.S.S.R. Nikolai Tikhonov, the well-

known poet. He stressed the fact that this Chekhov anniversary is a particularly momentous occasion during today's mortal fight against man-hating nazism.

Speeches were also made by Ivan Moskvina and Olga Knipper-Chekhova—the oldest actors in the Art Theatre, and by the writer Leonid Leonov.

In her address, the widow of Anton Chekhov said:

"Chekhov lived with an avid thirst for the renovation and happiness of his native land. He wrote of this in his books with a sure and impassioned pen. Chekhov's cherished dreams have come true in our country. The fact that in these days of grim and cruel battles our people are paying him such homage by so widely marking the fortieth anniversary of his death constitutes the highest award a people can give a writer whom they recognize as their national artist."

And these words call to memory the words of Chekhov himself, spoken by his heroine in the tale *Betrothed*:

"Oh, that this new, pure life would come sooner, so that one could look one's fate in the eyes, bravely and boldly, feel oneself in the right, be gay and free! And this life must come sooner or later, come it will!"

And like a bridge, these words span the years from Chekhov to our days, a bridge across which he comes to us as contemporary and as a friend.

J. B. Priestley was known throughout the U.S.S.R. Long before the war, *They Walk in the City* and *Dangerous Corner* had aroused considerable interest. Later, *Black-out in Gretley* met with resounding success, and now *Daylight on Saturday* published in *Novy Mir* (The New World) monthly is being read with tremendous interest and is scheduled for early publication in book form.

A readers' forum was held recently at the Ordjonikidze machine-building works in Moscow to discuss J. B. Priestley's books on Britain at war. Three hundred people came together to exchange opinions on Mr. Priestley's books. A bulletin issued in connection with the forum contained criticism by engineers, foremen and workers.

What the Russian reader thinks of Priestley's pictures of war-time England can best be judged from the report of a representative of Mr. Priestley's Russian publishers and from a number of interesting contributions to the discussion by readers. One of these, Mikhail Yermolayev, an engineer, made the following remark on *Black-out in Gretley*:

"What impressed me most," he said, "is that though written in the form of a detective novel, the book draws the reader's attention to a theme of tremendous importance—the struggle against the fifth column. Priestley draws a vivid picture of life in a small provincial town, and of people who, under the guise of patriots, are deeply inimical to their own country and the whole liberation struggle of progressive mankind. But they are opposed by devoted men and women prepared to fight the enemy to the end."

Anne Avtonomova, a designer, particularly likes *Daylight on Saturday*.

"Priestley is a great master of the psychological portrait," she said. "Each worker in his aircraft works stands out sharply, clear-cut, with all his characteristic traits. Over fifty varied and memorable figures remain with the reader. There is the young country girl, for instance, the housewife, the eccentric aristocrat, the old skilled workman. Engineers and executives are also shown with all their individual technical interests and political viewpoints."

Another designer, Mezevetsky, who has a similarly high opinion of *Daylight on Saturday*, made the point that the book strongly appeals to all factory people.

"There is much in this novel that is particularly close and comprehensible to men of the factories," he said. "Although we do not know much about life in England, still we are firmly convinced that it is exactly as Priestley describes it. And that is the most important thing. The writer shows a fine gift of observation and keen sense of humour, and it is particularly important that he has been able to portray his workers at different stages of development: the old foreman was quick to detect the enemy, but the younger workers in their enthusiasm fail to understand much of what goes on in the factory."

Semyon Sokolov, an engineer, thinks that Priestley "made particularly good job of Elrick".

Peter Sabaneyev, the factory librarian, notes the moving scenes in *Daylight on Saturday*, such as the tragic end of the chief Engineer Elrick, the conversation about love overheard in the factory clinic and the meeting with the old actors.

The forum at the machine-building works is proof of the Soviet reader's keen interest in modern literature abroad. Soviet readers want more books like Priestley's which help them to understand Britain and her people in these grim days of war.

As is well-known to philatelists throughout the world, Soviet postage stamps reflect all the most important events in the Soviet Union, while the country's best artists have always worked on new stamp designs—two facts explaining the tremendous interest evinced in Soviet stamps not only within the country, but also abroad.

It is quite natural that from the beginning of the National War, postage stamps have marked the various episodes occurring in the great struggle being waged by the peoples of the U.S.S.R. There are stamps bearing portraits of persons previously unknown in the country but who have shown themselves to be heroes in the battles for their country's independence, such as Zoe Kosmodemyanskaya, Shura Chekalin, the airmen Victor Talalikhin and Nikolai Gastello, Lev Dovator and others. The National War series is a picture gallery representing fighting men from all branches of the service.

Parallel with these, stamps are still being issued dedicated to prominent figures in Russian literature, art and science, such as the series to mark the hundred-and-twenty-fifth anniversary of the Russian classical writer Ivan Turgenev; the seventy-fifth anniversary

of the birth of Maxim Gorky, the great proletarian writer; the fiftieth anniversary of Vladimir Mayakovsky. Other similar series include that marking the two-hundredth anniversary of the death of Vitus Bering, famous explorer and discoverer of the north-western sea passage along Siberia, and whose name was given to the straits separating Siberia and Alaska; three stamps which depict the gallant Soviet conquerors of the stratosphere Ussyskin, Vassenko and Fedosseynko, who set a world record by attaining a height of 19,000 metres in January 1934, but who perished during their descent when they met difficult atmospheric conditions.

A special series of seven stamps is devoted to the life of the great Russian whose memory is sacred to the Russian people—Vladimir Ilyich Lenin. Another series marks the centenary of the birth of the composer Rimsky-Korsakov.

Among the more recent stamp issues, philatelists are particularly attracted by the "Orders of the National War" series consisting of four stamps.

On June 14th, United Nations Day, two stamps of the same design but of different value were issued. In each, the centre is occupied by the flags of the U.S.S.R., Great Britain and the U.S.A. in natural colours, with the caption: "June 14th, United Nations Day". Around them are the flags of other Allied states.

Fifty years have passed since the death of Pavel Yablochkov, the talented Russian scientist and inventor of the arc-lamp. Yablochkov was one of those Russian scientists talented by nature, who stubbornly and tirelessly followed the course which they set for themselves.

The wonderful discovery of the "Russian candle", as Yablochkov's invention was later christened abroad, was the outcome of numerous

daring experiments. It was in 1875 that Yablochkov and his friend N. Glukhov, a retired captain of artillery, elaborated the first practical method of electrolysis of common salt. One day, during their experiments, two carbon electrodes which happened to be lying parallel in the electrolytic bath, accidentally touched. The result was a brilliant spark—the forerunner of the arc light. Yablochkov gazed on it, as though he were bewitched. He was unknowingly standing on the threshold of a discovery of paramount importance. Later on he worked out the details of that "electric candle", which was a marvel of simplicity.

Yablochkov and his invention were covered with glory in 1878, at the Paris World's Exhibition. Shortly after this, Yablochkov's electric candles illuminated St. Petersburg—the first chain of arc-lamps spread across the Liteiny Bridge over the Neva. "Russian candles" now illuminated Paris and London. The French press at that time wrote: "Russian light" is today brilliantly illuminating the Châtelet Theatre, the shops of the Louvre, the Place de l'Opéra, in Paris, the port of Le Havre, the Thames side in London. In Paris alone 1,000 'Russian candles' have ousted 70,000 gas lamps from the streets."

The gas companies did their utmost to discredit their dangerous competitor and to destroy this new form of electric lighting at its very birth. Yablochkov was baited by the German papers. But all their efforts were in vain: "Russian candles" were burning everywhere.

Yablochkov died in 1894. So indefatigable a worker was he, that it was only with great difficulty that he was persuaded to go to bed when he fell ill, and even then, he only agreed to be put to bed on condition that a little table with his tools be placed near his bedside so that he might continue his work. And he died, working.



Three new Soviet stamps. Left to right: the Order of Suvorov, United Nations Day, the Order of Kutuzov

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